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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

NIETZSCHE, RENAN AND THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT: CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

BY

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

By comparing their critiques of the French Enlightenment, this monograph discusses the diverse responses of two nineteenth-century thinkers to the challenge of the eighteenth century. Broadly-speaking, the Enlightenment can be viewed as the seedbed of modern western critical thought, insofar as it was the first period when a majority of Europe's leading thinkers constructed moral, political and historical philosophies which dispensed with the idea of Providence. In seeking to come to terms with the intellectual revolution created by the Enlightenment, most nineteenth-century philosophers of history overcame this loss of the notion of heavenly grace by replacing it with the notion of terrestial justice. Ernest Renan was one such philosopher. Focusing his attention upon Voltaire and the eighteenth-century treatment of religion, Renan urged a harmony of critical inquiry and religious sympathy, thereby combining tradition and modernity into a more comprehensive concept of la science than allowed for by his Enlightenment predecessors. History, Renan believed, had to be viewed as the work of "humanity," and his endeavour to understand Christianity as a purely secular achievement formed a central part of his idea of progress, an idea fundamental to his century.

Friederich Nietzsche, on the other hand, did not

share the prevailing assumptions of his day concerning universal harmony and progress. Concentrating upon Rousseau, whom he singled out as the prime instigator of the modern world's decadence, Nietzsche attacked the idea of a Providence-free, self-fulfilling humanity. Rousseau's alleged belief in social and political change as the means of man's moral improvement, Nietzsche felt, inspired the chimerical secular philosophies of his own day. Faith in terrestial justice and progress was as unfounded as the Christian concept of history had been. Because Renan was one of his era's more celebrated preachers of such a secular faith, Nietzsche saw in him a leading nineteenth-century false prophet. Renan's historical writing, with its sympathy for Christianity as a progressive historical creation, represented for Nietzsche an unmistakable decadence. Yet Nietzsche's assault on Renan obscured the fact that, in much of his later non-historical writing, Renan began to express a pessimism and a lack of confidence in "humanity." The Renan of later years sometimes sounded a great deal like Nietzsche himself, with his fear of mass-men and his conviction that the value of history lay only in the cultural achievements of an elite of intellectually-gifted <u>ubermenschen</u>. Still, in the final analysis, Nietzsche was alone among the great thinkers of his century in rejecting both Providence and "humanity" as ends in themselves. His alternative was to affirm nihilism and to transcend it by seeing historical meaning only in cultural heroes that a figure like his beloved Goethe was and that he, Nietzsche, wanted to be.

La révolte métaphysique proprement dite n'apparaît dans l'histoire des idées, de façon cohérente, qu'à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Le temps modernes s'ouvrent alors dans un grand bruit de murailles écroulées.

Comment vivre sans la grâce, c'est la question qui domine le XIXe siècle. "Par la justice" ont repondu tous ceux qui ne voulaient pas accepter le nihilisme absolu. Aux peuples qui désesperaient du royaume des cieux, ils ont promis le royaume de l'homme.

Avec Nietzsche, le nihilisme semble devenir prophétique.

--Albert Camus, L'Homme révolté (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), pp. 43, 269, 87.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Much of the thought of the nineteenth century could be read as a response to the still-unresolved challenges posed by the eighteenth. In virtually all questions of religion and politics, men of the generations following the age of the Enlightenment and of the "democratic revolution" wrote in the lingering shadows of those momentous eighteenth-century upheavals.[1] How did one define new moral and social values for a civilisation whose Christian world-view had been largely, if not wholly, destroyed and, subsequently, whose ideas of freedom and authority had been recast into drastically different shapes? Such were the sorts of questions that the nineteenth-century mind faced and had to attempt to solve, questions raised but far from settled by the thinkers of the previous one hundred years.

It was France that had served as centre-stage for the intellectual and political dramas of the eighteenth century. Consequently, it was France which, in the succeeding epoch, provided the focus of attention for those seeking to settle the outcome of those dramas. The French Enlightenment's challenge to posterity had been a multi-dimensional one, but the essential substance of it could perhaps be summed up in the word "humanity"--that is, humanity

secularized.[2] The eighteenth century, especially in France, had marked the first time in European civilisation that a majority of the day's leading intellects threw away the idea of original sin and, with it, the idea of any sort of divine sanction for moral and political beliefs. This process of de-Christianization entailed the need for a radical revision of previously-held assumptions about the meaning of human existence; it called for a redefinition of human possibilities in terms of a new-found independence from Providence. In spite of the false traditional image of them as blandly rationalistic, optimistic, and Utopian,[3] the philosophes were quite aware of the ominous as well as of the exhilerating implications of this reduction (if not abolition) of God,[4] and their "tragic humanism"[5] grew out of their realisation of the limits of human capacity.

Yet the French Enlightenment did practice a certain confidence in the self-emancipatory and self-ameliorative powers of man, and its campaign to spread this new faith in human potential continued well into the nineteenth century. The reception of this faith by the post-1800 mind was manifold and ambiguous; nineteenth-century conceptions of the purpose of and prospects for "humanity" carried as many different designs as there were thinkers to invent those designs. Still, one article of faith was common to the vast majority of nineteenth-century philosophers of "humanity"-- the faith in an eventual earthly realm of human justice to replace the now-abolished heavenly realm.

It was largely on this account that the nineteenth century spawned such a bulk and such a variety of historical writing. Never has a period of western civilisation produced so much in the way of philosophies of history. This abundance can be traced to that era's attempt to respond to the "revaluation of all values" prompted by the French Enlightenment and Revolution. With the dissolution of the notion of Providence, the need arose to re-assess the role of humanity in history. With God now removed from history, how was one to understand the unfolding of the ages, the great events and men that had molded western civilisation into its present-day shape? How was the nineteenth century to understand the most basic tradition of western civilisation, Christianity, now that the eighteenth century had shattered the belief that Gospel and Church had arisen by divine inspiration rather than through autonomous human action? What were the implications of the new political order and ideas inaugurated by the French Revolution's often-contradictory appeals for liberty and equality?

In nineteenth-century France, a number of deeply-cultivated minds devoted themselves to the historical craft in an endeavour to answer these questions. One of the more important of these thinkers was Ernest Renan (1823-1892). Of all French writers of the period, it is he who first comes to mind when we consider the historical critique of Christianity. His monumental Histoire des origines du christianisme, published between 1863 and 1882, has been

described by no less a critic than the late Edmund Wilson as "a masterpiece--perhaps the greatest of all histories of ideas."[6] No other thinker, save perhaps Comte, is more closely associated with nineteenth-century "faith in science" than is Renan. In the second half of the century, no French scholar enjoyed more popular acclaim. Renan's Vie de Jésus, the first volume of his Origines, was by some accounts the French best-seller of the century.[7] Unlike other great historians of his nation and time, such as Michelet, Guizot, Thiers, or Taine, Renan did not undertake to write a history of the Revolution. Notwithstanding this, he did hold to a distinct interpretation of the Revolution, one which holds the key to his political views. Inexorably bound up with his philosophy of history, his political philosophy constituted a typical nineteenth-century French endeavour, in the fashion of Constant or de Tocqueville, to synthesize the heritage of 1789 with that of the ancien régime. Through the more immediate, personally-lived experiences of 1848 and 1870-71, Renan was made fully conscious of how the problems of 1789 were still largely unresolved ones. His political thinking was tightly tied to his history of Christianity, for Renan's historical writing had some bearing upon all aspects of his world-view. As his most recent biographer has put it, Renan sought "to inculcate into a Voltairean middle-class a reverence for Christianity as a human creation and to swing the masses away from socialism into support of the new religion or idealism of which he was the prophet."[8]

While Renan did indeed style himself a prophet and while an immense public applause encouraged him to play this part, some voices cried out against this "new religion" which he and his time sought to advertise. One of these dissenting voices was Friederich Nietzsche (1844-1900). A rebel against virtually every widely-accepted value of his century, Nietzsche responded in a largely unprecedented fashion to the challenge of modern times: idealism, Romanticism, and positivism in the world of thought; liberalism and egalitarianism in the world of politics; religious faith versus secular science. Not attempting to harmonize these contradictory ideas--in the manner of many a nineteenth-century thinker like Renan--Nietzsche, rather, sought to transcend them. With his eyes fastened on France, which he believed the real theatre of any and all significant cultural happenings in nineteenth-century Europe, he rejected the cult of science, the idea of progress, and the legacy of the French Revolution. Though his (in)famous proclamation that "God is dead" signified the final consummation of the Enlightenment's assault on Christianity, his repudiation of the nineteenth-century paean of "humanity" implied a denial of equally final proportions, a denial not only of his own era but of the preceeding century as well. Christianity never met a more vehement critic than Nietzsche; yet the theme of a Providence-free, self-fulfilling humanity, which the French Enlightenment had prepared and the nineteenth century practised, never itself experienced a more

formidable foe. Nietzsche suffered almost complete ignominy during his own lifetime (or at least until his collapse into madness). Consequently, unlike Renan, he had no real share in the Weltanschauung of the nineteenth century. His greater significance lies in his role as a prophetic voice more relevant to the twentieth, a role more often than not grotesquely and shamefully misunderstood by our century. As Albert Camus wrote in L'Homme révolté, "we shall never finish making amends for the injustice done to him."[9]

The succeeding two chapters of this monograph investigate first Renan's and then Nietzsche's critiques of the French Enlightenment.[10] It is, quite naturally, the Enlightenment's two most important figures, Voltaire and Rousseau, to whom Renan and Nietzsche refer most often when they assess the Enlightenment. For reasons made obvious in the following chapters, "the eighteenth century" tends to be synonymous, in Renan's usage, with Voltaire, and in Nietzsche's usage, with Rousseau. Chapter IV interprets Nietsche's view of Renan as a doubly representative figure, both as Frenchman and as historian. The conclusion to this study, comprising Chapter V, evaluates Nietzsche and Renan not only vis-à-vis the French Enlightenment but also with respect to each other. Hence, this essay might be described as "a comparative study in intellectual temperaments." What follows, the reader is invited to approach within such a frame of reference.

CHAPTER II

RENAN ON VOLTAIRE AND ROUSSEAU

> ...pour nombre d'esprits, Renan a rendu la foi impossible, et il a rendu aussi impossible la guerre à la foi. Il a radicalement détruit ce que Voltaire avait ébranlé, mais il a aussi radicalement détruit l'esprit voltairien.
>
> --Gustave Lanson[1]

Unlike Nietzsche, Renan felt very much at home in the nineteenth century. Whereas Nietzsche began to gain a measurable acclaim only after his collapse into madness, Renan enjoyed immense renown and literary success during his productive years. Nietzsche felt alien to his own time; he regarded the nineteenth century as a regression from the Enlightenment and looked mostly to the Greeks for intellectual comfort. Renan, by contrast, was firmly committed to the superiority of his own era, despite the shortcoming he recognized in it. Certainly he saw his century as an improvement on the eighteenth and, in a sense, viewed the progress made over the previous one hundred years in terms of the very things which Nietzsche interpreted as decadent. His praise of German-Protestantism in the nineteenth century exemplified this view. Renan claimed to have discovered in this particular brand of Christianity a progressive

synthesis of the religious with the critical spirit. Nietzsche, with no eagerness for such synthesis, diagnosed the same nineteenth-century German Protestantism as the most extreme stage of Christianity's deterioration.

Thus, it was significant that the German biblical scholar Davis Strauss,[2] scorned by Nietzsche as a miserable imitator of Voltaire, met with applause from Renan. Writing to Strauss at the end of the Franco-Prussian war, Renan called upon him to recognize France's reconstruction as necessary for the intellectual future of Europe. The French critical tradition, insisted Renan to Strauss, had acted and had to continue to act as a force of protest against narrow-mindedness and dogmatism. "You, who have understood Voltaire so well, should understand that."[3] A number of years earlier, in a commentary on Strauss's Leben Jesus, Renan had praised the work both as innovatively critical and as "a book of sacred exegesis." The German scholarship exemplified by Strauss's book, asserted Renan, stood in bold contrast to French studies, where "the schism between theology and lay science is much more marked." Going on to deplore this schism, Renan hypothesized that "Voltaire, in Germany, would have been a professor in a faculty of theology."[4]

Renan's identification of Strauss with Voltaire sheds light on his attitude toward the French Enlightenment. The synthesis which Renan found in Strauss (and in German biblical scholarship generally), and for which he himself strove, was simply this reconciliation of the critical with

the religious spirit. Such a synthesis found expression in Renan's desire to safeguard the Voltairean spirit of free inquiry but, jettisonning its polemical and mocking style, to criticize religiously. Precisely on account of such an endeavour to balance scrutiny with piety, Nietzsche ridiculed Strauss and was to attack Renan.

Therefore, insofar as he sought to counteract the Enlightenment's mockery of religion, Renan's attitude toward Voltaire was a predominantly negative one. Yet we must not allow this antipathy to obscure Renan's occasional words of admiration for the French Enlightenment.[5] To that period he accorded a significant, if limited, respect.

Voltaire represented, to Renan, more of a break with, than a continuation of, the seventeenth-century classical tradition. This is partially explained by Renan's generalized view of the eighteenth century. Whereas Nietzsche saw the era as a battlefield between a waning classicism (Voltaire) and an emerging Romanticism (Rousseau), Renan spoke of le XVIIIe siècle at large, as if the period represented a single scheme of ideas. He tended to interpret the eighteenth century as a period unique in itself, between, yet apart, from the earlier classic and the later Romantic movements. The Enlightenment represented progress over seventeenth-century classicism, just as nineteenth-century Romanticism and idealism marked progress beyond the Enlightenment. Voltaire's attempts at classical drama, like the Henriade, were no longer read because they imitated literary forms of

the past.[6] The eighteenth century may have had no Racine, but it was superior to Racine's time by virtue of its stronger critical and scientific elements, as manifested in the Encyclopédie and Voltaire's "luminous essays."[7]

Renan's acclaim for the Enlightenment can be regarded in terms of how it satisfied his desire for progress through synthesis. He noted "the remarkable alliance" which that century "held between les sciences and les arts, of which [the work of] Voltaire is the model."[8] To Renan, Voltaire was for the modern era "the first singular combination of a strongly irreligious and even immoral turn of imagination with a weighty and sane philosophy."[9] Renan's desire for harmony is also revealed in his contrast of established religious doctrines with eighteenth-century philosophy. The latter he regarded as "addressing itself to everyone, without distinction between followers and laymen," as having "changed the world and aroused vigourous convictions without making itself into sects or religions." This was an achievement impossible for any dogmatic religious teaching.[10]

The powerful flexibility of the Enlightenment mind prompted Renan, in his youthful L'Avenir de la science (1848), to hail the eighteenth century as a time dominated by thinkers, not politics. The spectacle of such a domination no doubt pleased him, and he contemplated it at length. He pointed to that century as a time when les hommes de l'esprit "held the great concerns of humanity in their hands." As examples of thinkers who "took hold of the century, shaped it, and

created the future," he named Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. Of what long-range importance was the War of the Austrian Succession or the Seven Years War, he rhetorically asked, in comparison to L'Esprit des lois or Du Contrat social?[11] In terms of "action exerted on the movement of things"--perhaps an allusion to the Revolution--Renan felt sure that posterity would regard Voltaire and Rousseau more highly than metaphysicians like Descartes or Kant. "The eighteenth century, however superficial, achieved its results a great deal more by criticism, history, and positive science than by metaphysical abstraction." D'Alembert and the Encyclopédie exemplified this spirit of "positive science"[12]

Renan also paid homage to the Enlightenment's contribution to social amelioration. "The fundamental idea of Voltaire and all the eighteenth century was that man could, by using reason, reform the abuses of society."[13] The "people's charter of rights," he claimed, was the accomplishment of the savants. Voltaire he labelled as "the man who has done most to bring about a world-empire of common sense, of justice, of tolerance." Turgot and Condorcet he lauded as thinkers whose "wonderful sense of progress . . . should place them high among the benefactors of humanity."[14] He noted the Enlightenment's humanitarian achievement, such as its advances in reducing the legal practices of arbitrary imprisonment, excessive punishment, and torture. It was Voltaire, asserted Renan, who had done most to make such an

achievement possible.[15]

Renan's tribute to Voltaire and the era which he represented may have acknowledged his social conscience, historical influence, and his role in furthering "positive science." For the critical method of le siècle des lumières, however, Renan had little sympathy, especially for its attitude toward and treatment of the Bible and popular faith. He saw in the French Enlightenment both a profound lack of feeling for the imaginative richness of religious beliefs and a severe limitation of historical consciousness; each of these failings served to reinforce the other. On account of such alleged scholarly deficiencies, Renan found Voltaire and his contemporaries unacceptable as historians of religion. He willingly acknowledged the social progress which Voltaire's ideas had helped to implement, but was reluctant to credit him with any lasting accomplishment in the historical discipline.

> Voltaire did not understand the Bible, nor Homer, nor Greek art, nor ancient religions, nor Christianity, nor the Middle Ages. He did an excellent job; he instituted justice, tolerance, and public common sense. [For this,] let us bow to him. We live upon what he has founded. But in the realm of ideas he has little to teach us. He is not in the tradition of great culture; out of him has come no really fruitful succession of research and scholarly work.[16]

In what areas did Renan find shortcomings in eighteenth-century religious criticism? There were, for example, some instances where Enlightenment attempts to transcend the confinements of religiously-oriented scholarship

resulted in the imposition of another sort of confinement. In their "claim to substitute for theological infallability another infallability," that of reason, the philosophes were as rigid, as absolutist, as "deeply Catholic" as the Catholicism against which they were warring.[17] Renan objected to "the oversimplified natural hypotheses, for example, those of the eighteenth century, where everything [concerning religion] is reduced to the proportions of an everyday act of imposture or credulity." Such explanations for religion were as unsatisfactory as the "supernatural hypotheses" they were supposed to discount.[18] Just as biblical apologists were wrong to take the Bible as "an absolute work, outside of time and place," so was Voltaire unjustified in treating it as an eighteenth-century book. "From that point of view, he naturally found absurdities in it."[19]

Renan, for his part, called for an intellectual temperament capable of overcoming the narrowness of the eighteenth-century method. To this end, he distinguished his own intellectual mission from Voltaire's, remarking that he neither wanted nor was able to play the polemicist's role.

> Nothing will make me change my obscure but scientifically fruitful role for the part of the controversialist, an easy part in that it puts the writer in the good graces of persons who believe that one must fight fire with fire. This polemic, the need for which I am far from contesting, but which is neither to my liking nor to my ability, is best left to Voltaire. <u>One cannot be a good controversialist and a good historian at the same time</u>.[20]

We can pinpoint Renan's methodological differences with Voltaire and the eighteenth-century anti-clerical tradition--the incompatability he saw between a truly scientific approach and a polemical style. The polemicist could not fully appreciate matters of religion, for he would fail to grasp the mythical and symbolic significance of ancient beliefs and religions. Regardless of how silly or outrageous they may have seemed in a modern context, these traditions were important for the historian seeking to account for all the subtle expressions of past religions. Mockery and polemic could serve the interest of the party which sought to combat fanaticism, but such were not the methods of the scientific critic. Renan admitted the existence of a rire philosophique, a laugh at oneself, such as the laughs of the Greeks at a parody of some tragedy over which they had just wept. Such joking, however, had no place in "scientific affairs" or "higher criticism":

> Nothing is funny among the works of humanity. In order to give such a twist to serious things, one must narrow them down, neglecting what is true and admirable in them. Voltaire made fun of the Bible because he didn't have the feel for primitive works of the human spirit. He would have made fun even of the Vedas and was bound to make fun of Homer. Joking obliges one to see things solely by their rough appearances; it rules out the delicate nuance. The first step in the philosophical career is to fortify oneself against [the use of] ridicule.[21]

How was this ridicule to be overcome? Renan suggested finding an alternative to the eighteenth-century "acid of reasoning" (acide du raisonnement) that "analytical,

dry, negative haughtiness, incapable of understanding things of the heart and of the imagination."[22] No longer acceptable was that type of criticism which attempted "to explain everything by superficial catchwords: superstition, credulity, fanaticism."[23] The shallowness and limited scope of Voltairean scepticism had to be replaced by a science of sympathetic exegesis which could take account of religion not by its "rough appearances" but in terms of its deeper emotional and mythical significance. For this approach, the nineteenth-century scholar must look to Germany: "the work of biblical exegesis . . . . is undeniably the master-work of the German genius, the most definitive model that can be set up for the branches of literary history [philologie]."[24]

Yet how well acquainted was Renan with this "German genius"?

> The important thing is not to glean particular ideas here and there, but to grasp a spirit [esprit] which implicitly encloses everything. I have read but a few lines of the Germans, and I know their theories as if I have read twenty volumes, for I put myself in their point of view . . . I am hardly acquainted with [the ideas of] the Germans except through Madame de Stael; I have been taking in their theories by induction. To hear me talk, one would think that I had read fifty volumes of German critics.[25]

To contend that he had grasped the "spirit" of German thought by such loose methods may have been a questionable claim. Still, it is certain that Renan did take in a few broad themes from German philosophy.[26] As his friend James Darmesteter wrote, "Renan traversed the German systems without settling there; he drew from them only certain principles:

from Hegel, the idea of Becoming, and from Herder the idea which corrects and compliments Becoming, the role of spontaneity in creation."[27] He had likely encountered Hegel through the writings of Victor Cousin, who earlier in the century had been a prominent French popularizer of German philosophy. Herder was undoubtedly Renan's favorite German scholar, one whom he repeatedly called his penseur-roi and the only one whom he had read extensively; Herder's studies of primitive language and poetry had impressed him deeply. Among other German thinkers, Kant and Fichte (their moral philosophies in particular) and Goethe (the enormity of his genius in general) had caught his attention, less by direct study than through popularizations like Madame de Stael's De l'Allemagne. Antiquarian studies by poets like Lessing and Winckelmann, in addition to the Romantic-Protestantism of scholars like Schliermacher and Feuerbach, also appear to have attracted him. But Renan was no qualified specialist in German thought; he saw in it merely what he wanted to see. In his Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse (1883), he bemoaned the lack of a happy medium between "rigorous [Catholic] orthodoxy" and "free thought in the manner of the French eighteenth-century school." For a resolution of these two extremes, he looked across the Rhine:

> The particular spirit of Germany at the end of the last century and in this first half of this one, struck me. What I was seeking was indeed there--the reconciliation of a highly religious spirit with the critical spirit.[28]

Renan's attraction to the German mind was, perhaps, more a projection of his own yearning for a synthesis of critical thought and religious-mindedness than it was a genuine affinity with Teutonic philosophy. He tended to exaggerate his debt to German thought. Even in La Réforme intellectuelle et morale, written after the events of 1870-71, he could write, "Germany had been my teacher. I realized that I owed to her what was best in me . . . the country of Kant, Fichte, Herder, Goethe."[29] Despite this declaration, what was best in Renan only in small part owed to his supposed immersion in German Romanticism and idealism.[30] Yet, broadly-speaking, his own "organic" conception of history was much closer to that of Herder and Goethe than to the earlier, more mechanistic historical schemes of Montesquieu or Voltaire.[31] Regardless of whatever individual roles in the history of ideas they may have played, Renan felt that, on the whole, German scholars were much better historians than the French. Therefore, he looked to Germany for a model of what he held to be the historical frame of mind.

Renan located the origins of this frame of mind in late eighteenth-century Germany, where, he believed, genuine sympathy for the study of ancient religions had first blossomed. He contrasted French and German intellectual developments in general, Voltaire and Goethe in particular, emphasizing the narrowness and frivolity of the one as opposed to the sensitiveness and scrutiny of the other.

> What a weak place the [French] eighteenth century occupies in the progress of historical criticism! . . . What naive certainty in [its] manner of judging the past! What shallow presumption in [its] disdain! Voltaire did more harm to historical studies than an invasion of barbarians. . . . The diametrical opposite of Voltaire is not Catholicism; between the two there are more affinities than one might think. The opposite of Voltaire is liberal Protestantism . . . coming forth at the end of the eighteenth century with Schiermacher, Herder, Fichte, with this wonderful maturation of German Christianity, the finest intellectual and religious development which the reflective consciousness had produced up to then.[32]

> While France was seeking to interpret the religions of antiquity according to her superficial philosophy, Germany was using her religious genius to get to the heart of them . . . Lessing, Winckelmann, and even the Hebraist Herder discovered in ancient cults the religion of beauty.[33]

> Goethe and his great contemporaries, while rendering homage to our initiative, showed that Voltaire wasn't everything, despite his well-earned glory. The heart, as well as the mind, is a master to whom we must listen. Religion no longer meant a slavish attachment to superstitions of the past, nor did it mean the narrowness of a theological orthodoxy. [For the Germans,] <u>it meant that the infinite was something keenly appreciated, clasped, and made real in all aspects of life</u>.[34]

The key word here is "the infinite" (<u>l'infini</u>). It designates what, in Renan's eyes, the Germans sensed while the French did not. German liberal-Protestantism had produced a reflective consciousness far more encompassing than the French Enlightenment's. Goethe had found poetic depth in Greek religious mythology, at which the French only laughed. The Germans, unlike the French, admitted the heart as well as the mind as a factor in comprehending

the past. All of this bore witness to the German consciousness of the infinite. Voltaire and the lumières, unable to think outside of a narrow eighteenth-century context, were bound to fail to appreciate all the varieties of historical truth.

> . . . revolving in a very limited circle of ideas, depriving themselves of any truth which could not be fitted into a finite framework, . . . the great writers of that time wanted to see only the finite; things appeared to them in their definitive state; they never saw them in the process of coming to be [en train de se faire].[35]

According to Renan, the German thinkers of the later eighteenth century, unlike the French, both understood and sympathised with the imaginative qualities of religious myth and belief. On this account, the Germans were able to exercise a much wider historical consciousness; i.e., to be aware of the infinite and of things in the process of coming to be. Owing to this more developed historical mind, Germany had taken up the task of biblical exegesis in the nineteenth century. In his own historical writing, Renan sought to emulate this German method, one which could deal in imaginative exegesis without resorting to anti-religious propaganda and polemic. Furthermore, Renan hoped that this method would gain universal currency in questions of religion and history. He ventured the judgement that

> history will surely attribute to the first half of our century conquests in the realm of the spirit, a general sense of proper behaviour, . . . a taste for freedom, a tremendous widening of the scope of

> imagination, notions of science, philosophy and poetry of which our most civilised eighteenth-century ancestors had but the vaguest feeling.[36]

"A tremendous widening of the scope of imagination (un élargissement extraordinaire du cercle de l'imagination)--that, in a phrase, summed up Renan's goal of a religious scholarship more sensitive than the Enlightenment's had been. The debunking inquiry of the eighteenth-century acide du raisonnement had helped to undo the harm done by intolerant orthodoxy, but the nineteenth century demanded a more open-minded critical method. Such a method would compliment negative debunkery by a positive appreciation of the subtleties and nuances of religious faith. With this synthesis, the scope of imagination is broadened and knowledge (la science) progresses.

* * *

In assessing Renan's views of Voltaire and the eighteenth century, one must keep in mind his distaste for nineteenth-century voltairianisme--that irrational anti-religious prejudice exemplified by M. Homais of Flaubert's Madame Bovary. His criticisms of Voltaire were an indirect and even, perhaps, unconscious means of striking out at voltairianisme. Renan deplored the attitude of voltairianisme in the French public of his time and hoped to combat it by reviving a popular respect for the aesthetic and moral qualities of Christianity by means of his historical writings. Voltaire and voltairianisme were, however, far from synonymous. That shallow, smug, sour and self-righteous

"love of progress and hatred of priests" practised by Homais represented only the worst qualities of Voltaire himself. Voltairianisme was considerably removed from the grace, wit and erudition of the Sage of Ferney. In his eagerness to undo voltairianisme, perhaps Renan too readily reviled the real Voltaire.

Yet this did not annul the validity of Renan's critique of the French Enlightenment's negative bias in matters of religion. Despite their justly-applauded achievement in reducing the moral and legal authority of an intolerant and often cruel religious orthodoxy, the French lumières were still subject to Renan's accusations against them. Their treatment of religion was often oversimplified and unscrupulous; this unfairness did blind them to the richly imaginative features of ancient and Judeo-Christian religion. Renan hoped to show the Bible as a work of literary art, not, in Enlightenment fashion, as a collection of silly myths. To this end, he undertook enterprises like his original translations of and commentaries upon Ecclesiastes, Job, and the Song of Songs. In comparison to Renan's more sympathetic scholarship, Voltaire's study of those same Old Testament books in the "Job" and "Solomon" articles of his Dictionnaire philosophique appeared somewhat frivolous. Renan knew Christianity to be a far more complex phenomenon than his eighteenth-century predecessors were willing to admit. His seven-volume Histoire des origines du christianisme attempted, with profound erudition, to distinguish the manifold subtle

blendings of beliefs and ideas which went into the making of the Christian myth during its first two centuries. Despite its own shortcomings, this masterwork penetrated early Christianity in particular and the psychology of religious belief in general far more than did any eighteenth-century French work. One has only to read the "Christianisme" - article of Voltaire's Dictionnaire philosophique in order to sample the Enlightenment's impatience in studying the same historical development.

Although justifiably zealous to combat over-simplified and unsympathetic religious historiography, Renan nevertheless underestimated his debt to the polemical crusade of Voltaire. To separate Voltaire's practical from his scholarly achievement was to create too sharp a distinction. Voltaire's practical significance in bringing about more tolerance, justice, and public common sense was inexorably linked to his less noble scholarly accomplishment; i.e., his propagandistic historical studies. Renan failed to realise that Voltaire's "écrasez l'infâme" was, given the intellectual warfare of the eighteenth century, a necessary part of the struggle against fantacism in episodes like the Calas affair. Voltaire's reflections on the Middle Ages in his Essai sur les moeurs, for example, were part and parcel of his fight against a clerical enemy that gave no quarter. Ridicule of the foe's past behaviour and beliefs was a tool in undermining his present-day authority. Although he did recognise Voltaire's contribution to the progress of tolerance, Renan

gave too little credit to the fact that Voltaire's polemicism also helped, albeit indirectly, to create the intellectual freedom which made later scholarship like Les Origines du christianisme possible. Renan lost his chair at the College de France after the publication of his Vie de Jésus (1863), but he was reinstated after the Franco-Prussian war, having been given a post in the Imperial library during the interim. No eighteenth-century scholar who so outraged the theological orthodoxy of his day would have received such accomodating treatment from the established powers. Renan, in contrast to the philosophes, suffered minimal interference in bringing all the equipment of modern scholarship to bear upon his religious studies. The intellectual freedom he enjoyed was in large part a heritage of the critical liberty fought for and won by Voltaire's "écrasez l'infâme."[37]

* * *

Renan paid far less attention to Rousseau than to Voltaire. In the case of Nietzsche's study of the eighteenth-century French mind, the reverse was true. Renan never made the same attempt as did Nietzsche to come to grips with Rousseau. Only in passing did Renan reflect upon the Voltaire-Rousseau opposition, a feud which for Nietzsche was a key theme in his interpretation of the eighteenth century. Given his view of French Enlightenment thought as uniformally a dry rationalism, Renan not only wholly neglected Rousseau's role as a founding figure of French Romanticism but he also failed to realise the marked influence of Rousseau upon those

German Romantic and idealist thinkers he so admired.[38] In his Cahiers de jeunesse, Renan recognized the diversity of Rousseau's character. "Some personalities," he wrote, comprise "strange mixtures of truth and affectation, pride, even vanity and of a detached fervour [enthousiasme désintéressé]. God alone has the key to such souls; [for example], J. J. Rousseau."[39] Yet despite this acknowledgement accorded Rousseau as someone often in conflict with himself and his milieu, Renan did not show any substantial awareness of Rousseau as a thinker, both in conflict with himself and his milieu. Excluding some of his remarks concerning Rousseau's political theory, only twice does Renan identify Rousseau as a thinker at variance with other schools of thought in his century. In his Vie de Jésus, he compares Rousseau's relationship to the eighteenth century with that of Socrates to the Sophist school, Jesus to Judaism, Luther to the Middle Ages, or Lamennais to Catholicism. All of these men hold a double significance in history, for they are at once products of and rebels against the traditions from which they emerged.[40] But Renan's explanation goes no further. In L'Avenir de la science, he refers to Rousseau as "an honest man in a pretentious century [siècle raffiné] . . . [who] looked back obligingly to the pre-civilized state which he called the state of nature." In his only allusion to the Voltaire-Rousseau feud, he noted Voltaire's celebrated words about how his reading of Rousseau had made him "feel like going on all fours."[41]

That Renan should have repeated such absurdities about Rousseau as an advocate of primitivism only further demonstrates his failure to come to grips with the Citizen of Geneva's thought.

Indeed, far from emphasizing the Voltaire-Rousseau feud, Renan tended to pair the two thinkers. He thought of them as the twin pillars upon which rested the intellectual power of the eighteenth century, a time, in his eyes, marked by the dominance of thinkers rather than of politics. The Revolution, he asserted, had been "made by philosophes," such as Condorcet, Mirabeau, and Robespierre; the deputies to the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies, as well as to the Convention, were "disciples of Voltaire and Rousseau, to the man, almost without exception."[42] Not until the eighteenth century did "the philosophical principle that man should belong only to himself . . . appear as a social dogma," a dogma which "Voltaire, Rousseau, and the French Revolution made into the basis of humanity's new faith."[43] Renan did not explain what it meant to be a disciple of Voltaire or Rousseau, let alone how one could be a disciple of both. He simultaneously hailed Condorcet, Mirabeau and Robespierre as if to suggest that there was a unity of purpose and a common triumph shared by these three. Did Renan here forget the fate of Condorcet, hunted down by Robespierre's police? (He remembered this elsewhere.[44]) In seeing Voltaire, Rousseau, and the French Revolution as proclaimers of man's right to independence, did Renan,

at this point, lose sight of the state-authoritarianism for which, elsewhere, he condemned the political philosophy of Rousseau and the Revolution?

Any awareness on Renan's part of differences among the philosophes emerged most distinctly when he came to compare Rousseau to Montesquieu and Turgot. In the context of how the ideas of these three thinkers allegedly related to the Revolution, he preferred Montesquieu and Turgot. To Renan, the political philosophy of those two philosophes guided the early stages of the Revolution; i.e., the period of the constitutional monarchy. Rousseau, by contrast, he held up as the ideological mentor of those responsible for the intemperance of the Revolution's later, republican stages.[45] "The beginnings of the Revolution were certainly admirable . . . but Rousseau's erroneous politics got the better of it."[46] Blame for the excesses of state power resulting from the Revolution

> . . . ought not to fall on the superior men who prepared the Revolution or even began it--Montesquieu, Turgot, truly liberal political men. It [the blame] falls upon the so-called revolutionary school, which attaches itself especially to Rousseau and which gave the French Revolution its definitive character; i.e., its tendency toward abstract organization, disregarding both previous rights and liberty.[47]

To this "so-called revolutionary school," Renan preferred the idea of a liberal-constitutional monarchy. Only this form of government could afford the hierarchical political structures at once flexible enough to prevent despotism yet rigid enough to ensure an orderly, aristocratic

society. It alone could afford a medium between the tyranny of autocratic kingship and the anarchy of majoritarian democracy. In La Réforme intellectuelle et morale (1871), Renan urged a constitutional monarchy for France, as had Montesquieu and Turgot in the previous century.[48] Only with the passing of time did he reconcile himself to the Third Republic. Although in La Réforme he paid tribute to the French Revolution as the central event of modern times,[49] he never forgave Rousseau's revolutionary school, "the first consequence of [whose] harsh and shallow philosophy, a premature successor to the philosophy of Montesquieu and Turgot, was the suppression of the monarchy."[50]

Why had Rousseau's political thought led to such destructive results? Renan singled out what he felt to be its overemphasis on the abstract, reasoning approach to politics. This method, according to Renan, concerned itself more with the state as an entity in itself, as a disembodied Absolute, than with the diverse interests which the State ought to represent and safeguard. "The whole question is to know whether there is an Absolute in politics. If there is, the process of deduction can be applied to it." Renan did not accept the first part of this hypothesis, for it was precisely this notion of the State as a supra-historical Absolute that he feared. "One proceeds from a certain point of view, . . . Rousseau['s] for example, and one builds logical sequences upon it. Absurd things follow."[51] Renan desired a political philosopy which would be "a compromise

between the rationalism . . . of the eighteenth century, recognising only the right of reason to govern humanity, and the rights resulting from history. The unsuccessful experience of the Revolution has cured us of the cult of reason."[52]

Renan objected to Rousseau's thought on other grounds as well, though he did not care to voice these objections forcefully. Despite whatever lip-service Renan may have paid to them, the principles of popular sovereignty, fraternity and equality so central to the Contrat social "held very little credit by him."[53] It was, he felt, a desirable but chimerical ambition to transform Rousseau's principle of equality into a social fact.[54] Renan believed political democracy to be essentially incompatible with cultural excellence and, to illustrate this incompatability, he pointed to the contradiction in which the eighteenth century had placed contemporary society. The "conquests of civilization" accomplished by an enlightened few had to be made accessible to the many, but how was it then possible to maintain the quality of that civilisation, elitist by its very nature? The "abasement of some and even of the majority" was perhaps a "necessary condition of society, such as modern times, and especially the eighteenth century, have shaped it."[55] Was this to suggest that to preserve and further the scientific and critical progress of the Enlightenment, a progress acknowledged by Renan, was to be fundamentally at odds with the hopes of political fraternity and equality

expressed by the Enlightenment's most revolutionary thinker? The youthful Renan may have entertained some notions of egalitarianism, but on more mature reflection he repudiated the idea of a society where the majority of men would play a role in the creation of civilisation. The tone of this repudiation was pessimistic and reluctant, as if to convince readers that he was admitting to beliefs he held out of necessity rather than out of free choice. But such a quasi-apology for his anti-democratic views was, here as elsewhere, unconvincing. In the 1890 preface to his L'Avenir de la science, a book originally written in 1848 but not published until 1890, he asserts:

> The idea of an egalitarian society, such as it emerges from some pages of this piece of writing, is thus a dream . . . Humanity's enlighenment [lumière], morality, and art will always be manifested by an elite, by a minority safeguarding the tradition of the true, the good, and the beautiful. . . . Inequality is written into nature; it is the consequence of freedome, and individual freedom is a necessary postulate of progress.[56]

"Progress, of course, meant above all else for Renan the advancement of knowledge, of la science, just as "freedom" implied above all else the liberty of the thinker. Renan was convinced that this progress, and the freedom necessary for it, were possible only in a state where the intellectually-talented few could rise unhindered above the level of the masses. Such a conviction surely lay at the root of his preference for the aristocratic politics of Montesquieu and Turgot to the democratic egalitarianism of Rousseau.

Just as Rousseau and the First Republic had disregarded the traditions of political liberty growing out of the past, the egalitarianism which they bequeathed to the future likewise threatened intellectual liberty.

What Rousseau lacked was, in a larger sense, sound historical perspective -- a failing similar to that of Voltaire's religious scepticism. Voltaire had judged religions in an eighteenth-century context without understanding their historical development. In the same manner, Rousseau and the thinkers of the revolutionary school theorized about politics without sufficient attention to the evolution of political mores. The eighteenth century's acide du raisonnement risked the destruction of all that was aesthetically valuable in religious traditions. Similarly, the Revolution's Cult of Reason, which preached a levelling egalitarianism and which made a supra-historical Absolute of the state, ran the danger of ruining time-honored conceptions of liberty.

Not content with merely criticizing Voltaire's views on religion or Rousseau's views on politics, Renan boldly sought a still-deeper explanation of the failure of the eighteenth century to develop a profound historical consciousness. This explanation, a superficial and weakly-argued one, is worth noting only insofar as it exemplifies the dangerous tendency toward oversimplification implicit in his generalisations about the French Enlightenment. According to Renan, "the eighteenth century"--a term by which he meant the French

mind of the eighteenth century--did not understand the differences between the mind of primitive man and that of modern man. He accused the philosophes of being so imbued with their conceptions of man as a creature of "deliberative consciousness" (conscience réfléchie) that they neglected to take account of the role of the "spontaneous" (spontanée) as an active force in the cultural achievements of primitive humanity. The theme of spontaneity in primitive cultures had been a keystone of the historical philosophy of Herder, Renan's penseur-roi. Yet Renan failed to consider that, just as certain elements of German thought of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had exercised a fluid, imprecise, yet significant influence upon him, certain French Enlightenment ideas had exercised a similar influence upon his favorite German thinkers. Rousseau was, in this context, the pivotal thinker; more than any other philosophe he fired the imagination of the Germans. Renan failed to realise this part of Rousseau's role in the history of ideas, and in consequence the validity of his blanket-accusations against the French Enlightenment (le XVIII siècle) was questionable.

The Enlightenment, charged Renan, carelessly imposed upon the past an eighteenth-century image of rational man. In interpreting all social and cultural productions as pre-meditated acts, the philosophes betrayed a serious historical shortsightedness. Understanding only itself, the eighteenth century overplayed its notions of an innately

conscious "creative power" (puissance inventrice) in the human imagination.[57] Thus, its thinkers could not properly account for the folk-poetry of primitive peoples, a poetry which grew out of no literary design but was produced spontaneously by a rich popular imagination.[58] It was a mistake to ascribe the origins of political authority to a deliberated act on the part of men, let alone to claim that morality emerged from a conscious agreement of men to set up codes of duties.[59] To maintain that languages were "consecutive creation[s], [invention successive]," that "man one day thought up the spoken word," was likewise a feeble argument.[60]

As a part of his attempt to improve upon (what he saw as) the limitations of Enlightenment historical thinking, Renan therefore emphasized that poetry, politics, morality or language could not be understood, historically, in terms of a conscious, rational progression. The Enlightenment had regarded all human achievements as deliberated acts rooted in consciously-felt needs. Hence, it erroneously treated primitive societies and cultures as the inventions of men with rational powers supposedly like those of eighteenth-century man.

> The philosophy of the eighteenth century had a marked tendency toward superficial explanations in all matters concerning the origins of the human mind. [It] took man with the present-day mechanism of his faculties and indiscreetly transposed this mechanism into the past without thinking of the profound differences between the first stages of humanity and the present state of consciousness. It seemed that man was always deliberative, contriving,

> reasoning, as he has come to be in our own time. Everytime the philosophes of that era of which we speak seek to represent primitive man to us, we are surprised to see only modern man with his rich development of rational faculties.[61]

Regardless of how applicable it may have been to any other of the French lumières, this critique hardly did justice to Rousseau. Renan footnoted Rousseau's refutation in the Discours sur l'inégalité of Condillac's theory of languages as "consecutive creations,"[62] but this was scarcely enough. There may be some justice in Renan's specific condemnation of Rousseau's politics as too abstractly rational. But as concerns his ideas about primitive man, Rousseau must be exonerated from Renan's blanket-accusation against the eighteenth century. If his Second Discourse stressed anything, it was precisely that the man of a pre-civilized age acted almost wholly on animal-like needs and immediate impulses. Only very gradually did Rousseau's primitive man assume powers of logical deliberation. Indeed, Rousseau's ideas on human development can be interpreted as a stimulating impulse behind elements of Herder's philosophy of history,[63] such as the concept of "spontaneity," which, Renan insisted, the eighteenth-century French mind had ignored. In Renan's listing of those "artificial explanations" allegedly belonging to the eighteenth century, one might see a summary of those very notions Rousseau himself combatted. Yet ironically Rousseau was surely one of the thinkers implied when Renan spoke of "the philosophy of the eighteenth

century." Although Rousseau's political science perhaps gave too much weight to the idea of an innately rational man, his anthropology certainly did not. That the man of primitivity was "deliberative, contriving, reasoning," that he was presented in such a way that we saw only a version of modern man with the same rational powers--was this not the very antithesis of the picture of "the first stages of humanity" which Rousseau drew in the first half of the Discours sur l'inégalité? Renan ought to have been more careful in making sweeping judgements about eighteenth-century thought which, if even unwittingly, contradicted the ideas of the man who was that century's most important thinker.

* * *

Because he dwelt almost exclusively upon Rouseau's role as a reputedly abstract political thinker, Renan failed to appreciate the larger significance of the Citizen of Geneva's work. The impact of Rousseau's moral, educational and literary ideas upon succeeding generations of Romantic writers, German thinkers included, went unnoticed by Renan. Yet this impact was far more distinct and far more direct than Rousseau's highly tenuous and ambiguous influence upon the course of the Revolution,[64] that influence for which Renan had mostly condemned him.

The weakness in Renan's treatment of Rousseau stems from his overgeneralized view of the Enlightenment, a view which marked Rousseau with Montesquieu, Voltaire, Turgot or Condoret as representative of a century uniformally

characterized by a powerful but unimaginative rationalism. His comparison of Turgot's and Montesquieu's politics to Rousseau's did not belie his attempt to see unity in French eighteenth-century thought. That Montesquieu was more concretely historical while Rousseau was more abstractly logical may have meant a considerable difference of method. Nevertheless, Renan's urge for intellectual harmony could lead him to place both political thinkers together as typical of the eighteenth century, the one with his Esprit des lois and the other with his Contrat social. He spoke numerous times of Voltaire and Rousseau, only once of Voltaire against Rousseau. His pairing of the two dramatized his belief that what they had in common, by virtue of their intellectual greatness and revolutionary impact, proved more significant than how they differed by virtue of their specific philosophies. To all the philosophes, without exception, Renan ascribed an urge for reform and a critical energy. But his desire to impose a homogeneity of sorts upon the French Enlightenment obsured his vision of the deeper diversities in the thought of the period. His utter neglect of Rousseau's Romantic elements is the outstanding example of this failure, a failure excusable only in terms of his focusing of attention on what he saw as a more fundamental set of diversities; the superficiality of French rationalism in contrast to the genius of German imaginativeness.

CHAPTER III

NIETZSCHE ON VOLTAIRE AND ROUSSEAU

> Als Kritiker der bestehenden Welt bedeutet Nietzsche fur das 19. Jahrhundert, was Rousseau im 18. war. Er ist ein umgekehrter Rousseau: ein Rousseau durch seine ebenso eindringliche Kritik der europäischen Zivilisation und ein umgekehrter, weil seine kritischen Maszstabe genau entgegengestezt zu Rousseaus Idee von Menschen sind.
>
> --Karl Löwith[1]

"To the memory of Voltaire, in commemoration of his death, May 30, 1878."[2] Such was the dedication carried by the first edition of Nietzsche's Human, All-Too-Human, Part I. Shortly after the appearance of Part II of the work, an anonymous Paris admirer sent Nietzsche a bust of Voltaire with a note explaining that "Voltaire's soul pays its compliments to Friederich Nietzsche."[3] A decade later in Ecce Homo, Nietzsche revealed the significance of linking Voltaire to a book as curiously titled as Human, All-Too-Human.

> Human, All-Too-Human is the monument of a crisis. It is subtitled "A Book for Free Spirits"; almost every sentence marks some victory--here I liberated myself from what in my nature did not belong to me. Idealism, for example; the title means, "where you see ideal things, I see what is--human, alas, all-too-human--I know man better."
>
> The term "free spirit" here is not to be understood in any other sense; it means a spirit that has become free, that has again taken possession of itself. The tone, the voice, is completely changed; you will find the book clever, cool, perhaps hard and mocking. A certain spirituality of noble taste seems to be fighting continually against a more passionate

> current in order to stay afloat. In this connection it makes sense that it was actually the hundredth anniversary of the death of Voltaire that the book pleaded, as it were, as an excuse for coming out in 1878. For Voltaire was above all, in contrast to all those who wrote after him, a grandseigneur of the spirit--like me. The name of Voltaire on one of my essays--that really meant progress--toward me.[4]

Voltaire's name on the dedicatory page of Human, All-Too-Human might seem all the more natural considering that, while engaged in preparation of the book, Nietzsche first took to reading the eighteenth-century French masters. It was during the winter of 1876-77 that he began to devote serious attention to the work of Voltaire and, to a lesser extent, of Diderot.[5] Beyond merely marking a new-found interest in the French Enlightenment, however, Human, All-Too-Human signaled a turning-point in his intellectual development. Written in the period immediately following his rupture with the idols of his youth, Wagner and Schopenhauer, the book had been the first to appear after his celebrated repudiation of and polemic against Wagner in the fourth of the Untimely Meditations. Given these circumstances, Nietzsche's mention of a "crisis" and of his self-emancipation from "what in my nature did not belong to me" clearly referred to the break with Wagner. The "free spirit," with its "clever, cool, perhaps hard and mocking" manner and "noble taste" was a spirit of which Nietzsche felt himself, like Voltaire, to be representative. Both Voltaire and he struggled against "passionate currents"

which, although unnamed, were readily identifiable; in his own case, the influence of Wagner; in Voltaire's case, that of Rousseau. That Nietzsche believed Voltaire's hardest and noblest battle to have been that against Rousseau's eighteenth-century proto-Romanticism is no less certain than his conviction that his own greatest struggle had been against Wagner's nineteenth-century arch-Romanticism. Thus, he could label Voltaire "a grandseigneur of the spirit"; both Voltaire and he had stood fast as lonely supporters of classic nobility against the prevailing tone of Romantic decadence. Nietzsche interpreted Voltaire not merely as an expression of the eighteenth century but also, perhaps even moreso, as an example of the seventeenth-century classical tradition.[6] The French had failed to produce a true successor to Voltaire, he lamented in Human, All-Too-Human; they had turned from classicism in order to follow the Romantic model by "springing into a Rousseau-like state of nature and experiments." The classic tradition, once exemplified by Voltaire, had withered.

> Once for all, Voltaire was the last of the great dramatists who with Greek proportion controlled his manifold soul, equal to even the greatest storms of tragedy--he was able to do what no German could, because the French is much nearer akin to the Greek than is the German; he was also the last great writer who in the wielding of prose possessed the Greek ear, Greek artistic consciousness, and Greek simplicity and grace; he was, also, one of the last men able to combine in himself the greatest freedom of mind and an absolutely unrevolutionary way of thinking without being inconsistent and cowardly.[7]

Such artistic self-discipline and "Greek proportion" constituted the very qualities Nietzsche felt were absent in an age of Romantic vulgarity. Only through striving to achieve these qualities, those of the classic spirit, was self-emancipation from Romanticism possible. In this way, Nietzsche came to conceive of the Voltaire-Rousseau and Nietzsche-Wagner hostilities in terms of a clash of classic versus Romantic style.

More broadly, he viewed Voltaire as manifesting all that was best in the mind of the ancien régime, a mind which, in many if not in most respects, Nietzsche believed superior to that of the modern era. As was the case with Petrarch in the fourteenth and Erasmus in the sixteenth centuries, Voltaire had done most to carry forth "the banner of enlightenment" in the eighteenth century.[8] In Voltaire's aphorism, "croyez-moi, mon ami, l'erreur aussi a son mérite," an aphorism by which "the difference between past and present-day free-thinking cannot be better characterized," Nietzsche perceived "all the fearlessness of the eighteenth century."[9] This comparison suggested that Nietzsche felt his own century lacked the courage of the eighteenth. Learning from others as well as from its own mistakes, Voltaire's century had been fearless enough to take risks with its ideas. But whereas the Enlightenment proved able to doubt, and to doubt itself, the nineteenth century over-believed in the tenacity of its own ideas and avoided any excercise of self-criticism comparable to that of the eighteenth.

Voltaire's maxim, for Nietzsche, was perhaps best summed-up in Nietzsche's famous aphorism: "a very popular error--having the courage of one's convictions: rather it is a matter of having the courage for an attack on one's convictions!!!"[10] Its significance for Nietzsche's view of nineteenth-century thought lay in his belief that, unlike the flexible and self-critical Enlightenment mind, his own era was rigid, arrogant, and self-righteous in its so-called "free-thinking."

Nietzsche's polemic against David Strauss, which comprises the first of the Untimely Meditations, serves as a case in point.[11] Taking Strauss as an example of the modern temperament and using Lessing, and to a lesser extent Voltaire, as models of the Enlightenment, Nietzsche opposed the style of the nineteenth-century critique of Christianity to that of the eighteenth. Whereas Strauss wrote in a fashion insufferably smug and belabored, the Enlightenment writers possessed finesse, wit, and subtlety. In stark contrast to Renan, who hailed Strauss's work as a synthesis of what was best both in Voltairean criticism and in religious scholarship, Nietzsche mocked Strauss for posing as a "German Voltaire" and sneered at his attempt "to affect the manner of the free-spirited and fawn-like man of antiquity that Voltaire was."[12]

Nietzsche's high regard for Voltaire was, however, qualified. Voltaire, in his eyes, expressed what was best in the classic tradition and in the mind of the ancien regime. Yet precisely because of this, Voltaire's role in

history marked not a beginning but an end. In The Gay Science, Nietzsche hinted that Voltaire's insistence on "courtly taste" as a measure of literary style was not only pretentious but anachronistic.[13] The Sage of Ferney had been "the last of the great dramatists" and "a man of antiquity"; he had not been a "modern". Nietzsche's tributes to Voltaire must be read not as an example for the mind of the present, but as nostalgia for the mind of the past. In Human, All-Too-Human I, the very book he had dedicated to Voltaire, Nietzsche warned:

> The higher culture an individual attains, the less field there is left for mockery and scorn. Voltaire thanked Heaven from his heart for the invention of marriage and the Church, by which it had so well provided for our cheer. But he and his time, and before him the sixteenth century, had exhausted their ridicule on this theme; everything that is now made fun of on this theme is out of date, and all too cheap to tempt a purchaser. Causes are now inquired after; ours is an age of seriousness.[14]

This, despite the sourness of the nineteenth century critical spirit incarnate in writers like Strauss, Nietzsche believed that it served no purpose to advocate the polemical mockery of the eighteenth century as manifested in Voltaire's works. Superficially, at any rate, Nietzsche was at one with Renan on this point: both felt their century to be "an age of seriousness," an age in which the mission of critical reason aiming at a "higher culture" precluded any light trifling with themes as grave as the history of the Christian Church. But, whereas Renan rejected Voltairean mockery due

to its excess, Nietzsche rejected it because of its insufficiency. To Nietzsche's mind, the Enlightenment had, if only unwittingly, left the job half-done. If Renan's objective had been to reconcile the Enlightenment with the Christian tradition, Nietzsche's mission was to overcome one by means of the other. Far from being a matter of harmonizing the critical with the religious temperament, as it had been for Renan, the question, for Nietzsche, became one of radicalising the Enlightenment in order to destroy the vestiges of religion left behind by the eighteenth century's incomplete liberation from Christianity. It was no idle boast when, in August of 1883, Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast that "I am one of Christianity's most audacious opponents; I have devised an art of attack of which even Voltaire had no notion."[15] Hence, in his consideration of Voltaire's attitude towards Christianity, Nietzsche found much lacking.

Where had Voltaire failed? In terms of attacking Christianity and emancipating his thought from it, had Voltaire not done enough? In The Gay Science, Nietzsche suggested an answer. Like Newton and Spinoza before him, Voltaire had based his system of knowledge (Erkentniss) upon false premises. Newton had erred "because it was by means of science that [he] hoped to understand God's goodness and wisdom"; Spinoza, because he "thought that in science one possessed and loved something . . . truly innocent, in which man's evil impulses had no part whatsoever."

Voltaire's mistaken premise, relying on Newton's Deism and Spinoza's pantheism, was his belief in "the most intimate association of morality, knowledge and happiness."[16] Nietzsche everywhere denied this association; the pursuit of knowledge, far from being innocent and a means to morality and happiness, involved a transcendence of moral values, a seeking "beyond good and evil." The searching mind would find not happiness but suffering and would not illuminate morality but uncover amorality. Voltaire may have shifted Newton's God-centred world-view to a secular morality, yet Voltaire's Deism, like Newton's--and like Spinoza's pantheism--still operated on the false conviction that there exist moral laws at work in the universe, laws discoverable through science. In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche expressed his disillusionment with the Voltaire who had been "human, all-too-human".

> O Voltaire! O humanness! O nonsense! There is something about "truth," about the search for truth; and when a human being is too human about it--"il ne cherche le vrai que pour faire le bien"--I bet he finds nothing.[17]

In an earlier variation on this theme in The Dawn, Nietzsche had named Voltaire as the first in a line of French thinkers leading to Comte, who rejected traditional Christianity only to replace it with a "cult of Humanity." Needing vindication for their repudiation of formal Christianity, these thinkers felt impelled to create a secularized morality. "Not to fall short in this respect

of the Christian ideal, but to excel[in] it if possible, was [their] secret stimulus."[18] One form of this "cult of humanity" of which Nietzsche believed Voltaire guilty is suggested in a puzzling passage from The Gay Science:

> Wagner is Schopenhauerian when he preaches mercy in our relations with animals. As we know, Schopenhauer's predecessor at this point was Voltaire, who may have already mastered the art that we encounter among his successors --to dress up his hatred against certain things and people as mercy for animals.[19]

Nietzsche's ascribing of a "mercy for animals" to Voltaire brings to mind Voltaire's sarcastic attitude toward la canaille, an attitude that held the lower levels of society to be like herds of poor, dumb beasts in need of a gentle and patient prodding. Did Nietzsche mean to accuse Voltaire of being too circumspect to exhibit his dislikes without the mask of a metaphor? Perhaps Voltaire could not hate without pity, as Nietzsche could. Or was Nietzsche trying to point out Voltaire's subtlety? The not-innocuous grouping of Voltaire with Wagner and Schopenhauer (and, of all people, those two!) reinforces the likelihood that Nietzsche was raising an accusation against Voltaire as much as he was making any allusion to his subtlety. Voltaire's Enlightenment humanitarianism, his "mercy," might have been but an earlier version of the neo-Christian theme of "humanity" Nietzsche saw implicit in Wagners' later operas and in Schopenhauer's asceticism.

* * *

Nietzsche's attitude toward Voltaire was ambiguous. On the one hand, he was enthused with the man of classic form, of "Greek proportion," the representative of what had been best in the mind of the ancien régime. On the other, he was disenchanted with the Voltaire whose emancipation from Christianity had been arrested by an inability to transcend the still-Christian notions of a moral world-order and a "cult of humanity." Nietzsche's attitude toward Rousseau, however, carried no such contradictions. His comments on Rousseau, far more numerous and far stronger than those on Voltaire, displayed uncompromising hostility throughout. Perhaps there was no other thinker to whom Nietzsche felt more enmity, an enmity revealed by the sheer quantity as well as by the quality of his remarks. Far from neglecting Rousseau's broader significance, as Renan had done, Nietzsche fully acknowledged Rousseau's role in shaping the political, social, and intellectual categories of the nineteenth century. He held Rousseau at least partially responsible for, among other things, The French Revolution, the "plebeian" idea of equality, Kant's moral philosophy, feminism, Romanticism, and the perpetuation of Christianity. His obsession with Rousseau leaves no doubt that Nietzsche found him as fascinating as he did detestable.[20]

Much of Nietzche's criticism of Rousseau centres upon the two thinkers' differences over the relationship between civilization and morality. In The Dawn, Nietzsche

queried whether Rousseau had confused cause and effect in blaming civilization for the corruption of morality.[21] Likely alluding to the First Discourse in a note from The Will to Power, he examined "Rousseau's question concerning civilization: 'does man become better through it?'" "An amusing question," said Nietzsche, "since the reverse is obvious and is precisely that which speaks in favour of civilization."[22] The "question," posed by the Dijon Academy's essay contest in 1749 and answered by Rousseau's prize-winning Discours, had asked "si le rétablissement des sciences et des arts a contribué à épurer les moeurs." Nietzsche, like Rousseau, responded "no"; man had not become better through civilization, les sciences et les arts had not contributed to moral purification. That morality and civilization are fundamentally incompatible was Nietzscche's view as well. But, while Rousseau deplored civilization on this account, Nietzsche vindicated it. Rousseau, championing the cause of morality, deplored the tendency of les sciences et les arts to corrupt natural innocence by ignoring the distinctions between good and evil. Nietzsche, championing the cause of civilization, saw cultural excellence as possible only by means of transcending morality, and by affirming the artistic impulse beyond good and evil. If Rousseau had judged civilization in terms of its effects upon morality, Nietzsche judged morality in terms of its effects upon civilization.

Nietzsche perceived shades of Rousseau's moral

teachings at work in Christianity, the French Revolution, and modern socialism. All of these forces, he believed, likewise threatened civilization. In Twilight of The Idols, he asked:

> But Rousseau--to what did he really want to return? Rousseau, this first modern man, idealist and rabble in one person. . . . This miscarriage, couched on the threshold of modern times, also wanted a "return to nature"; to ask this once more, to what did Rousseau want to return?

Searching for an answer, Nietzsche had but to look at the French Revolution, "the world-historical expression of this duality of idealist and rabble." What Rousseau preached, the Revolution attempted in practice:

> . . . What I hate [in the Revolution] is its Rousseauean morality--the so-called "truths" of the Revolution through which it still works and attracts everything shallow and mediocre. The doctrine of equality! there is no more poisonous poison anywhere: for it seems to be preached by justice itself, whereas it is really the termination of justice. "Equal to the equal, unequal to the unequal" - that would be the true slogan of justice; and also its corallary: "Never make equal what is unequal." That this doctrine of equality was surrounded by such gruesome and bloody events, that has given this "modern idea" par excellence a kind of glory and fiery aura so that the Revolution as a spectacle has seduced even the noblest spirits.[23]

In such a way, the Revolution represented for Nietzsche a modern version, as it were, of the "nature" ideal which lay at the roots of Rousseau's morality, an ideal which called for a return to equality. "The French

Revolution [is] a continuation of Christianity," he wrote,[24] for he believed that there existed between Rousseau and Christianity no less certain a link than between Rousseau and the Revolution. Rousseau's concept of nature was nothing more than "one of the more concealed forms of the Christian ideal . . . a kind of attempt to read moral Christian 'humanity' into nature . . . as if nature were freedom, justice, idyll--still a cult of Christian morality, fundamentally."[25] He titled one of his notes "morality as a means of seduction," suggesting that to blame "tyrants and seducers, the ruling orders," for mankind's corruption, as did Rousseau, was comparable to "Pascal's logic, which lays the blame on original sin." Both Rousseau's social conception of evil and Pascal's metaphysical conception were based on the same contemptible premise that "nature is good for a wise and good God is its cause."[26] In Robespierre, Rousseau's neo-Christian "moral fanaticism" had found one of its chief disciples; Nietzsche offered as evidence Robespierre's words from a speech of June 4, 1794, about the Revolution's endeavour "to found on the earth an empire of wisdom, justice, and virtue."[27] "The socialist ideal," an offshoot of the Revolution's doctrine of equality, he defined as "the residue of Christianity and of Rousseau in the de-Christianized world."[28] This ideal comprised a "latent Christianity";[29] furthermore, Nietzsche insisted, "in all socialist upheavals, it is ever Rousseau's man who

who is the Typhoeus under Etna."[30] Thus, in all of these movements--the French Revolution, Christianity, and socialism--Nietzsche perceived a common impulse: the Rousseauean will to morality, a morality which paraded the insidious idea of justice as "equality."

Nietzsche judged not only Rousseau's ideas but also his personality, hoping to reveal the curious relationship between the two. In one sense, Rousseau's life belies his self-styled sincerity as a thinker. In The Gay Science, Nietzsche matched Rousseau with Plato and Dante as thinkers whose autobiographies lacked any creditibility.[31] In The Dawn, he pairs Rousseau with Schopenhauer as men "whose lives ran side-by-side with their knowledge like an uncouth bass which is not in tune with the melody."[32] Again in The Dawn, he notes Rousseau's anger with Diderot's maxim that "only the solitary are evil."[33] Earlier in the same book, Nietzsche suggests that the notion "nature is good" is merely a self-justification of men who, unable to avoid their disgust with each other, retreat into their private reveries. Failing to find any virtue in each other, or for that matter in themselves, they seek it in the abstraction of "nature."[34] All of this bore witness to Rousseau's fundamental dishonesty; the man's version of himself could not be trusted. His self-imposed solitude and private decadence were at odds with his social gospel of community endeavor and public virtue.

Yet, in another sense, Rousseau's life was

perfectly consistent with his ideas. Albeit his personal behaviour contradicted his pretentions to intellectual sincerity in his social doctrines, Rousseau's life, paradoxically, furnished the explanation for those doctrines. It was this very "unbridled vanity and unbridled self-contempt,"[35] to use Nietzsche's description of him in Twilight, that lay behind Rousseau's distinction between the corruption of society and the innocence of nature. Dissatisfied both with himself and with civilisation, Rousseau vented his frustrations by calling upon "nature" and by urging the overthrow of that society which he felt denied him.

> Oppressed and half-crushed to death by the pride of caste and the pitilessness of wealth, spoilt by priests and bad education, a laughing-stock even to himself . . . Rousseau contemptuously throws aside all the refinery that seemed his truest humanity a little while ago--all his sciences and his arts, all the refinements of his life--he beats, with his fists against the walls, in whose shadow he has degenerated, and goes forth to seek the light and the sun, the forest and the crag. And crying out, 'Nature alone is good, the natural man alone is human,' he despises himself and aspires beyond himself.[36]

> Men like Rousseau understand how to use their weaknesses, defects, and vices as manure for their talent. When Rousseau bewails the corruption and degeneration of society as the evil results of culture, there is a personal experience at the bottom of it, the bitterness which gives sharpness to his general condemnation and poisons the arrows with which he shoots; he unburdens himself, first as an individual, and thinks of getting a

> remedy which, while benefitting society directly, will also benefit himself indirectly by means of society.[37]

The full significance of these passages emerges only when they are read in the context of Nietzsche's total thought. Rousseau's self-justification, one for which his concepts of nature and equality served as masks, was rooted in the same state of mind that characterized all forms of "slave-morality," a state of mind which Nietzsche called ressentiment.[38] The theme of ressentiment, one central to Nietzsche's psychological theory, was given its most emphatic expression in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, in the chapter "On the Tarantulas." It appears likely that Nietzche had Rousseau in mind during the writing of that chapter, if only because he had already described Rousseau in The Dawn as "the moral tarantula."[39] He proclaims in Zarathustra:

> For that man be delivered from revenge, that is for me the bridge to the highest hope, and a rainbow after long storms.
>
> The tarantulas, of course, would have it otherwise. "What justice means to us is precisely that the world be filled with the storms of our revenge" --thus they speak to each other. "We shall wreak revenge and abuse on all whose equals we are not"--thus do the tarantula-hearts vow. "And 'will to equality' shall henceforth be the name for virtue; and against all that has power we want to raise our clamor!"
>
> You preachers of equality, the tyrannomania of impotence clamors thus out of you for equality; your most secret ambitions to be tyrants thus shroud themselves in words of virtue.[40]

Those who preached equality, like Rousseau, therefore were really preaching revenge. Lacking strength for genuine self-affirmation free of spite against others, the only "virtue" they knew was based on the desire to avenge their plebeian weaknesses. In the same way that Christianity provided him with the best traditional example of ressentiment in action, the Rousseau-inspired French Revolution served Nietzsche as its most dramatic modern example. Like Christianity, the Revolution signified a revolt of vengeful plebeians, a revolt which had its roots in an ennervated and declining civilization. Yet the Revolution was not only a result but also a generator of decadence, for, to re-quote the words in Twilight, "its Rousseauean morality . . . still works and attracts everything shallow and mediocre."

Notes from The Will to Power illuminate this two-way cause-and-effect relationship which Nietzsche perceived between Rousseau and decadence. The Revolution, both child and mother of decadence, had become possible through Rousseau's incitement of the plebeian masses; their pursuit of vengeance was, like all ressentiment, a sign of weakness. Seeking reflections of this feminine century, Nietzsche discovered Augustus Comte in particular and Romanticism in general. Comte mirrored Rousseau by virtue of his "domination of heart over head, sensualism in the theory of knowledge, altruistic enthusiasm." Romanticism betrayed its Rousseauean origins by means of its "good deal of histronics and self-deception."[41] In a possible allusion

to La Nouvelle Héloïse, Nietzsche declared: "Rousseau is the seducer: he again unfetters woman, who is henceforth represented in an ever more interesting manner--as suffering."[42] The "suffering" of Rousseau's heroine, torn between her emotional cravings and her sense of social duty was, of course, not the "suffering" Nietzsche conceived as a necessary part of any truly noble, creative act of man. Julie de Wolmar's self-abandonment first, to one, then, to the other of the extremities of her feelings and her failure to master either had no more in common with Nietzsche's idea of suffering than the word.[43] His inclusion of "suffering"--i.e. pseudo-suffering--as one element of the Rousseauean-feminine eighteenth century can perhaps be understood as his way of pointing to the capacity of that age for "histronics and self-deception," as exemplified in this most fundamentally Romantic of novels and of authors. The Romanticism of the eighteenth century had claimed to display suffering when, in fact, it had only surrendered itself to a self-pitying, womanish weakness of will that made a mockery of true Nietzschean suffering. Rousseau's "softening, weakening moralization" and his "belief in the dominion of feeling," both born out of his "hatred for aristocratic culture" and "unbridled ressentiment,"[44] precluded genuine suffering, which demanded a strength based on self-discipline, not a surrender to the passions. Nietzsche saw pitifully little of this strength among the literary figures of his century. Too weak to attain to the

aristocratic and classic style of Voltaire, they instead followed the plebeian-Romanic Rousseau.[45] In an 1887 letter to Peter Gast, Nietzsche asserted:

> . . . to me, at least, everything that Rousseau valued is a little questionable, likewise everyone who has valued him (there is a whole Rousseau family; Schiller belongs to it, Kant also, to some extent; in France, George Sand, even Sainte-Beuve; in England, Eliot and so on). Anyone who has needed "moral dignity," faute de mieux has numbered among Rousseau's admirers, down to our own favorite Duhring, who even has the good taste to present himself in his autobiography as the Rousseau of the nineteenth century. (Notice how a person stands vis-a-vis Voltaire and Rousseau; it makes a profound difference whether he agrees with the former or the latter. Voltaire's enemies, for example, Victor Hugo, all the Romantics--even the least sophisticated Romantics, like the Goncourt brothers--are all gracious toward the masked plebeian Rousseau. I suspect that there is a certain amount of plebeian rancor at the basis of romanticism . . .)[46]

In an important section entitled "My Impossible Ones" (Meine Unmoglichen), opening the "Skirmishes" chapter of Twilight of The Idols, he continued on this same theme.

> Rousseau: or the return to nature in impuris naturalibus.
>
> Sainte-Beuve . . . Plebeian in the lowest instincts and related to the ressentiment of Rousseau: consequently a romantic--for underneath all romantisme lies the grunting and greed of Rousseau's instinct for revenge . . .

> George Sand. I read the first Lettres d'un voyageur: like everything that is descended from Rousseau, false, fabricated, bellows, exaggerated.[47]

Notes of the same period as the letter to Gast and Twilight presented Byron's "sublime poses and vindictive rancor" as an example of "how what was sick in Rousseau was admired and imitated most," treating the Englishman, with Sand and Hugo, as "typical of the romantic pose of modern man." All three practised "noble indignation" (ressentiment), sought "consecration through passion" (the "dominion of feeling") and urged "a siding with the oppressed and underprivileged" (plebeian equality).[48] Kant's connection to Rousseau he had already revealed both in Part II of Human, All-Too-Human and in The Dawn. In the former work, Nietzsche had asked, "whence comes the moralism of Kant? He is continually reminding us, from Rousseau and the revival of Stoic Rome."[49] "He, too, had been bitten by the moral tarantula, Rousseau," he wrote of Kant in The Dawn, comparing Kant's "moral fanaticism" to that of "another disciple of Rousseau," Robespierre.[50] Finally, in a note from The Will to Power, he characterized Kant as "a moral fanatic à la Rousseau, a subterranean Christianity in his values," and attacked his admiration for the French Revolution.[51] Thus, Nietzsche once again emphasized the intimate ties which he believed existed between Christianity, Rousseau, and the Revolution, all of which were related to the broader themes of morality, ressentiment, and decadence.

* * *

Even though Nietzsche saw his century as decadent, he did not think it hopelessly so. Some of his notes of the 1880's hail "the progress of the nineteenth century over the eighteenth." In his own time, he declared, "'return to nature' has come to be understood more and more in the opposite sense from Rousseau's. Away from idyll and opera!" In contrast to Rousseau's century, his had become "more and more decisively industrious, moderate, suspicious against sudden change, anti-revolutionary."[52] As evidence that the nineteenth century was "more natural," he submitted:

> . . . there are signs that the European of the nineteenth century is less ashamed of his instincts; he has taken a goodly step toward admitting his unconditional naturalness; i.e., his strong immorality, without becoming embittered--on the contrary, strong enough to endure only this sight.
>
> This sounds to some ears as if corruption had progressed--and it is quite certain that man has not come closer to that "nature" of which Rousseau speaks but has progressed another step in civilisation, which Rousseau abhorred. We have become stronger: we have again come closer to the seventeenth century.[53]

The significance of these perplexing but important remarks depends upon two points: Nietzsche's view of himslf as symbolic, and his view of nature as an alternative to Rousseau's.

Firstly, Nietzsche styled himself as one of his century's more dramatic responses to Rousseau. Anti-idealism and fearlessness were features of his own philosophy.

Immorality without embitterment: such was Nietzsche's self-affirmation against society, an affirmation unlike Rousseau's in its abscence of ressentiment. His comments about "the progress of the nineteenth century over the eighteenth" meant, in effect, the progress of Nietzsche over Rousseau. Interpreted in this way, Nietzche's remarks did not belie his conviction that the nineteenth century was fundamentally decadent. He still assesed the prevailing spirit of his own time as a continuation--even an intensification--of Romanticism. When he spoke of the nineteenth century, he did not mean it only in a broad chronological sense, but also as a term to designate a form of resistance to Rousseau's eighteenth century. Rather than as a judgement on the nineteenth century at large, Nietzsche's words must be construed as an expression of his belief in "signs" of the nineteenth-century potential for self-emancipation from the eighteenth. Though his contemporaries were, for the most part, still ennervated by Romanticism and other attendant forms of decadence, Nietzsche personally had demonstrated that it was possible for his century to resist and to free itself from Rousseau's.

Secondly, Nietzsche's nineteenth-century "naturalness" differed from that of Rousseau and the eighteenth. As Kaufmann points out, Nietzsche liked to distinguish between "nature" and "true nature";[54] i.e., between Rousseau and himself. To be still more specific, we can interpret Nietzsche as distinguishing between three images of nature:

(1) Rousseau's theory *per se*; (2) the application of Rousseau's theory, and (3) his own "naturalness," or "true nature." The first of these, "nature" abstractly defined in Rousseau's terms, was in Nietzsche's eyes a fallacious image. True nature would express itself not in an idyll of social harmony but in a contest of tensions. Man's natural state was in reality one of struggle, reflecting the conflicts necessary to the creation of culture. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche viewed Greek culture as the product not of peaceful concord but of powerful hostility, between the Dionysian and the Appolinian.[55] To this view, he contrasted the prevailing Romantic notion of how culture came about:

> . . . this harmony which is contemplated with such longing by modern man, in fact, this oneness of man with nature. . . . is by no means a simple condition that comes into being naturally as if inevitably. It is not a condition that, like a terrestial paradise, *must* necessarily be found at the rate of every culture. Only a romantic age could believe this, an age which conceived of the artist in terms of Rousseau's *Emile* and imagined that in Homer it had found such an artist Emile, reared at the bosom of nature.[56]

Nietzsche's arguments aside, however, the real life attempts to put this theory into practice themselves sufficed to expose the peril of Rousseau's philosophy. Far from believing it to be this "terrestial paradise" of which Rousseau conceived in *Emile*, Nietzsche envisioned Rousseau's "return to nature" as, *in praxi*, a retreat "*in impuris*

naturalibus". A "return to nature" in the fashion of Rousseau meant to abandon oneself to raw impulse and uncontrolled passion. If Nietzsche saw Rousseau's theory of nature mirrored in Robespierre's preaching of wisdom, justice, and virtue, he no less clearly saw that nature reflected in the bloody mobs of the French Revolution.[57]

"True nature," the "unconditional naturalness" and "strong immorality" of Nietzsche's nineteenth-century man, had nothing to do with either the theory or the reality of Rousseau's nature. Admittedly, it may have borne a superficial resemblance to the reality in that it too was "violent" and "immoral," but these were qualities wholly removed from the destructiveness and bloodshed of the Revolutionary mob. Nietzsche's nature signified the violence of Greek creativity, the immorality of a free spirit seeking its ends beyond good and evil. This is why he declared that "we have become stronger" and "closer to the seventeenth century." A representative of the resistance to Rousseau's eighteenth century, he sought to define his own nature in terms of the seventeenth-century classic spirit, the same spirit that he had discussed in his tributes to Voltaire in Ecce Homo, Human, All-Too-Human I, and elsewhere. Those tributes, praising Voltaire as the man of "Greek proportion" who possessed the strength and grace of the classic tradition, stand in sharp contrast to his tirades against the weak, plebeian and Romantic Rousseau. It is the conflict between these images of Voltaire and

Rousseau that provides the completing element for Nietzsche's interpretation of the French Enlightenment.

* * *

In contrasting Rousseau with Voltaire, Nietzsche treated the two less as specific personalities and thinkers than as representatives of opposing values. Although he consistently sympathizes with Voltaire, Nietzsche attributes the greater historical impact to Rousseau; this is wholly in keeping with his conclusions on the success of decadence. This conviction that the Rousseau he despised, rather than the Voltaire he admired, had exercised a greater influence upon the course of history, merely served to illustrate his pessimistic interpretation of contemporary civilisation. In his eyes, the nineteenth century's inheritance from the eighteenth had been not Voltairean but Rousseauean, not progressive Enlightenment but decadent Romanticism. Five inter-related yet fairly distinct categories emerge in Nietzsche's analysis of the eighteenth century, which originate in his comparison of Voltaire with Rousseau. (Four of these are sketched in notes of the late 1880's.)

The first arises in his antithesis of the classic and the Romantic, or, to follow a more explicitly chronological distinction, that of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth. Nietzsche discussed the two centuries without mentioning specific thinkers, yet the qualities he attributed to each period unmistakably mirror those

characteristics which, elsewhere, he ascribed respectively to Voltaire and to Rousseau. The seventeenth century, "propre, exact, et libre," sought "to discover, to order, to excavate man." Abolishing any egotistical self-demonstration, its authors attempted to portray universal truths about the human enigma and were content to accept man as an "amas de contradictions", without trying to change his nature. This portrait of the seventeenth century, a portrait all the more significant by his use of the French phrases, immediately recalls Nietzsche's praise for the Voltaire of classicism. The following century, by contrast, had ignored the essential facts of man's nature so as to fit him to its utopia. Its art did less to pursue reality than to advertise its authors, charlatans who used their pens as propaganda tools for social and political goals. Such accusations echo those which Nietzsche had raised against the Romantics of his own century, who had taken their cues from Rousseau. "In short, it is the eighteenth century of Rousseau," Nietzsche insisted, to which his own generation had fallen heir. The mannerisms which "on the other hand, have not been inherited from it," such as "insouciance, cheerfulness, elegance, brightness of the spirit," plainly constituted the Voltairean aspects of the eighteenth century. These mannerisms had to be acknowledged less as indigenous features of Voltaire's century than as an inheritance from the seventeenth. In the same way, the "sensualism in matters of the spirit" dominant in Nietzsche's

time had to be recognised less as the nineteenth century's own creation than as an offshoot of the Rousseauean eighteenth.[58]

Offering another basis of comparison, Nietzsche posed strength against weakness. "Precisely in the sphere that Rousseau fought most violently," he emphasized, "one could find the relatively still strong and well-turned out type of man (those in whom the grand effects were still unbroken: will to power, will to enjoyment, will and capacity to command)." To such a type, exemplified in the Renaissance and in the French seventheenth century, "the man of the eighteenth century has to be compared . . . so that one feels what is at stake." Voltaire, who "still comprehended umanita in the Renaissance sense, also virtu," displayed this strength of will. Rousseau, "a symbol of self-contempt and heated vanity," demonstrated that "the domineering will is lacking; he moralizes and, as a man of rancor, seeks the cause of his wretchedness in the ruling classes."[59] The matter "at stake" is thus identified: the crucial conflict of a strong and independent will-to-power with ressentiment.

This conflict, bringing to mind Nietzsche's conception of Voltaire as a "grandsiegneur of the spirit" and of Rousseau as "this duality of idealist and rabble," points in the direction of a third play of contrast: aristocracy versus plebeianism. "Missionary of culture, aristocrat, representative of the victorious, ruling classes

and their valuations," Nietzsche wrote of Voltaire. "But Rousseau remained a plebeian, also as homme des lettres; that was unheard of; his impudent contempt of all that was not he himself."[60] This contrast slso recalls the letter to Gast about the "Rousseau family" (Voltaire's enemies . . . all the Romantics . . . are all gracious toward the masked plebeian Rousseau.") Concluding the letter, Nietzsche asserted that "Voltaire is only possible and sufferable in an aristocratic culture which can afford precisely the luxury of intellectual roguery."[61]

A final reading of the notes in The Will to Power reveals a fourth antithesis, one which this chapter has already discussed in the broader context of Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau: civilization versus morality. "The moral reprehensibility of man seemed to pre-occupy Rousseau," charged Nietzsche; calling upon God, who he believed the author of an innocent nature, Rousseau "cast a curse upon society and civilization." But Voltaire, who "felt the mitigation, the subtleties, the spiritual joys of the civilized state," worked in "the cause of taste, of the arts, of progress itself and civilization."[62]

The fifth set of categories, one which implicitly comprises the other four, deserves special consideration. Classic contra Romantic, strength contra weakness, aristocracy contra plebeianism, civilization contra morality--all of these seem to meet in what Nietzsche saw as the single most consequential aspect of the Voltaire-

Rousseau conflict: the crisis of the Enlightenment *contra* the French Revolution. The fact that Nietzsche treated it in his books, rather than leaving it in his notes as he had done in his discussion of other aspects of the Voltaire-Rousseau dichotomy, testifies how important this contrast was to his analysis. In some of his earliest writing, Nietzsche had already set forth his ideas about the Enlightenment's relationship to the French Revolution. In both parts of his *Human, All-Too-Human*--Part I of which he had dedicated to Voltaire--he devoted long passages to the theme:

> *A Delusion in Subversive Doctrines.* There are political and social dreamers who ardently and eloquently call for the overthrow of all order, in the belief that the proudest fane of beautiful humanity will then rear itself immediately, almost of its own accord. In these dangerous dreams there is still an echo of Rousseau's superstition, which believes in a marvellous primordial goodness of human nature, buried up, as it were; and lays all the blame of that burying-up on the institutions of civilization, on society, State, and education. Unfortunately, it is well known by historical experiences that every such overthrow reawakens into new life the wildest energies, the long-buried horrors and extravagances of remotest ages; that an overthrow, therefore, may possibly be a source of strength to a deteriorated humanity, but never a regulator, architect, artist or perfector of human nature. It was not *Voltaire's* moderate nature, inclined towards regulating, purifying, and reconstructing, but Rousseau's passionate follies and half-lies that aroused the optimistic spirit of the Revolution against which I cry, "Ecrasez l'infame!" Owing to this the *Spirit of the Enlightenment and progressive development* has been long scared away; let us see--each of us individually--if it is

not possible to recall it![63]

> The Danger of the Enlightenment. All the half-insane, theatrical, bestially cruel, licentious, and especially sentimental and self-intoxicating elements which go to form the true revolutionary substance, and become flesh and spirit, before the Revolution, in Rousseau--all this composite being, with factitious enthusiasm, finally set even the Enlightenment on its fanatical head, which thereby began itself to shine as in an illuminating halo. Yet, the Enlightenment is essentially foreign to that phenomenon, and, if left to itself, would have pierced silently through the clouds like a shaft of light, long content to transfer individuals alone, and thus only slowly transfiguring national customs and institutions as well. But now, bound hand and foot to a violent and abrupt monster, the Enlightenment itself became violent and abrupt. Its danger has become therefore almost greater than its useful quantity of liberation and illumination, which it introduced into the great revolutionary movement. Whoever grasps this will also know from what confusion it has to be extricated, from what impurities to be cleansed, in order that it may then by itself continue the work of the Enlightenment and also nip the Revolution in the bud and nullify its effects.[64]

These passages stress several points which, although present in Nietzsche's other writings, here emerge in an especially dramatic way: (1) that he conceded the primacy of Rousseau's influence upon the eighteenth century, (2) that he not only separated Rousseau from "the Spirit of the Enlightenment" but stigmatized him as its aberration, (3) that, while exonerating Voltaire, he held Rousseau responsible for the French Revolution. Here as elsewhere, he reveals

that the Revolution meant for him principally one thing, the mob. He no less clearly indicated his belief that the Revolutionary mob can be traced to Rousseau, the thinker whose "passionate follies and half-lies" had perverted the Enlightenment's "progressive development." His homage to the true Enlightenment as "A shaft of light . . . content to transfigure individuals alone" served to emphasize his conviction that man can never be liberated through anything other than individual self-overcoming. The Revolution, in its pursuit of a radical transformation of man by institutional means, had not brought about any such liberation but had created a "violent and abrupt monster," the mob.

Indeed, these two sections from Human, All-Too-Human seem to anticipate Nietzsche's tirade against Rousseau and the French Revolution in Twilight of the Idols. Concluding section 48 of the "Skirmishes" chapter, Nietzsche writes: "in the end, I see only one man who experienced [the Revolution] as it must be experienced, with nausea--Goethe." In section 49, which Kaufmann has labelled "his last great tribute to him,"[65] he defines Goethe's work as a "magnificent attempt to overcome the eighteenth century by an ascent to the naturalness of the Renaissance--a kind of self-overcoming on the part of that century." Goethe, Nietzsche went on, "conceived a human being who would be strong . . . self-controlled, reverent toward himself."[66] The contrast here with the Rousseau of section 48, "idealist and rabble in one person . . . sick with unbridled vanity and unbridled

self-contempt," carries a double significance. Nietzsche not only suggests a Goethe-Rousseau antithesis but implied a Goethe-Voltaire synthesis. Goethe's "nausea" with the Revolution and his "attempt to overcome the eighteenth century" perhaps represented for Nietzsche the spirit of the Enlightenment cleansed of the impurities of the Revolution. Nietzsche, of course, associated Goethe's return to nature" with his own idea of "true nature," marked by an independance, strength, and self-control opposed to the ennervating doctrine of equality and undisciplined Romantic passions of Rousseau's pseudo-nature. Goethe's famous epigram, "the classical I call the healthy, and the romantic, the sick," was greatly fancied by Nietzsche[67] and echoes his contrast of Voltaire with Rousseau. Although his admiration for Goethe surpassed that for Voltaire, Nietzsche's pictures of the two bore much resemblance for he envisioned both as expressing the Greek classical tradition.[68] Admittedly, he never explicitly identified Voltaire with Goethe, yet his praise of Goethe in Twilight as "a spirit who has become free" (ein freigewordener Geist)[69] brings to mind his words in Ecce Homo defining Voltaire--and himself--in exactly those terms. And there can be no doubt that Nietzsche saw Goethe's overcoming of "the eighteenth century," i.e., Romanticism, as the same battle earlier fought by Voltaire, the battle against Rousseau.

* * *

Nietzsche's critique of the eighteenth-century French mind in many respects constituted an attempt to explain the background of nineteenth-century "decadence." Hence he devoted most of his attention to Rousseau. Voltaire served him mainly as a stick with which to beat Rousseau, for it was only in the context of a contrast between Voltaire and Rousseau that Nietzsche's image takes on its full significance. Whenever Nietzsche judged Voltaire outside of this context, it was as often as not a negative judgement, an expression of disillusionment with a thinker whose emancipation from Christianity had been incomplete. His estimate of Voltaire must be understood in terms of its subordination to his views of Christianity--and of Rousseau, the "first modern man." If it were Voltaire whom he hailed as an embodiment of the best of ancien régime culture, it was Rousseau whom Nietzsche held directly accountable for the worst aspects of contemporary civilization: the French Revolution, Romanticism, "equality," socialism, and the disguised Christian morality which in some way underlay all of them. In summary, Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau turned upon three inter-related themes: morality, ressentiment, and nature. The latter bore special importance; Rousseau's idea of nature--in Nietzsche's eyes a pseudo nature--vindicated his ressentiment, while his morality in effect comprised Christianity reinterpreted in the light of this nature. Considered on the whole, then, Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau possessed unity, consistency, and even a fair degree of cogency. It showed special

imaginitiveness in its attempt at a psychological understanding of the relationship between Rousseau's personality and ideas. Nevertheless, three objections to this critique suggest themselves.

The first stems from the excess of Nietzsche's hatred-fascination with Rousseau. In him he discovered a scapegoat for any number of his animosities. Perhaps this is justified where an argument for Rousseau's extensive influence is virtually irrefutable, in cases such as Kant's philosophy, Romanticism, or the idea of equality. But to blame Rousseau for the French Revolution is not justified. Associating Rousseau with the mobs and with Robespierre showed a profound lack of critical justice. Rousseau can be made no more responsible for the "gruesome and bloody events" of the Revolution than can Nietzsche for the Nazis.

Secondly, much doubt remains as to whether Nietzsche really came to grips with Rousseau's idea of nature. In the fashion of legions of critics much less able than himself, he erroneously took Rousseau's idea of the "natural" life as representing a sort of primitivism stripped bare of the refinements of civilization. Rousseau's "nature" by no means implied this regression "in impuris naturalibus," to use Nietzsche's phrase. Contrary to the persistent popular misconception, Rousseau never advocated a return to primitivity. He entertained the notion of a "state of nature" purely as a hypothesis; in his Second Discourse, he explicitly stated that a genuine "state of nature" probably

never has existed nor ever will exist. The "state of nature" merely served Rousseau as a kind of academic fiction on the basis of which moral judgements could be made about contemporary modes of life.[70] Nor did his "nature" spell an incompatability with civilization, despite Nietzsche's exaggerated claim that Rousseau "abhorred" civilization. In Du Contrat social, Rousseau asserts that man's emergence from primitive conditions into those of an orderly, civilized society was a blessing. Formerly but an imperceptive creature of uncontrolled passions, man now becomes an intelligent, socially-conscious being whose "feelings are ennobled, [whose] soul is uplifted."[71] Emile, Rousseau's model "natural man," does not abandon or repudiate life among civilized men. There is much difference, Rousseau points out, between the natural man of raw nature, who is only a wild creature, and the natural man existing in society. It is the latter whom Emile is to become. If not living "like" the men of a pretentious civilization, Emile at least lives "among" them.[72] Carefully read, Rousseau's great "trilogy"--Emile, La Nouvelle Heloise, and Du Contrat social--reveals his vision of the life of nature as a vision to be realized within the context of civilization, not in opposition to it. Emile shows nature and society reconciled in the individual, while La Nouvelle Héloïse and Du Contrat social demonstrate how a similar reconciliation is achieved within the respective frameworks of the family and the political community.[73]

A third criticism of Nietzsche's treatment of Rousseau concerns his linking of Rousseau with Christianity. In view of the fact that even the much more aloof, watered-down Deism of Voltaire looked too much like Christianity for him, it is hardly surprising that Nietzsche should suspect the author of the Savoy Vicar's "Profession de foi" of harboring Christian instincts. Yet despite the parallels Nietzsche draws between Christian morality and the morality Rousseau offers, the two remain essentially different in their respective conceptions of man. In his religious thought, Rousseau put forth an ethics based on rational, secular principles, something which defenders of the Christian faith quickly and rightly castigated as fatal to the tradition of revealed, divinely-ordained religion.[74] Rousseau's challenge went still deeper; the Archbishop of Paris himself, in ordering Emile burned as a work of heresy, stressed the book's violation of the most basic Christian doctrine. By insisting upon the innocence of individual man at birth and in his first impulses, Rousseau had challenged the very doctrine of original sin. Of course, Nietzsche recognized this challenge, but he did not adequately acknowledge its significance. At a superficial level, the opening words of Emile--"All is well when it leaves the hands of the Creator of things, all degenerates in the hands of man"--might well appear to support Nietzsche's description of Rousseau's thinking as "one of the more concealed forms of the Christian ideal." They

might also have spurred Nietzsche's comparison of Rousseau with Pascal as a believer in "moral corruption." On closer examination, however, those words reveal a revolutionary significance for the history of ideas that Nietzsche refused to accept. Another German critic, more sympathetic and understanding, has poignantly summarized Rousseau's position. In analysing that first sentence from Emile, Ernst Cassirer has written:

> Thus God is condoned and guilt for all evil attributed to man. But since guilt belongs to this world, not to the world beyond; since it does not exist before the empirical, historical existence of mankind but arises out of this existence, we must therefore seek redemption solely in this world. No help from above can bring us deliverance. We must bring it about ourselves and be answerable for it. With this conclusion Rousseau finds the new approach to the problem of evil which he follows in his political writings undeviatingly to its logical consequences. Rousseau's ethical and political theory places responsibility where it had never been looked for prior to his time. Its historical significance and systematic value lie in the fact that it creates a new subject of "imputability." This subject is not individual man but society. The individual as such, as he comes from nature's workshop, is still without the pale of good and evil. . . . Society heretofore has inflicted the deepest wounds on mankind; yet it is society too which through a transformation and reformation can and should heal these wounds . . . . [Rousseau] has in fact placed this problem on an entirely new footing, removing it from the sphere of metaphysics and making it the focal point of ethics and politics.[75]

Rousseau's conception of morality, a purely secular one, cannot be matched with Christianity's moral teaching.

In spurning the notion of theologically-defined guilt, Rousseau removed the question of good and evil from metaphysics and placed it in a strictly socio-political context. This redefinition of moral responsibility marked a profound and radical emancipation from Christianity. Consequently, Nietzsche's labelling of Rousseau's philosophy as "a cult of Christian morality" cannot stick, whatever artificial resemblances Rousseau's teaching may bear to Christianity's moral doctrine. By its rejection of original sin, Rousseau's statement of man's bonté naturelle constituted a rebellion against Christianity. Nietzsche, in jettisonning any idea of moral guilt and, thereby, any "subject of 'imputability'" (to use Cassirer's phrase), parted with both Rousseau and Christianity. He conceived of salvation not in God nor in social transformation but by means of uniquely individual "self-overcoming." Yet this idea of man's self-fulfillment was still rooted in the soil sown by Rousseau, for, before Nietzsche, Rousseau had already insisted upon a definition of all values in solely human, wordly terms. Nietzsche's scale of values, notwithstanding its repudiation of Rousseau's social and political philosophy, still carried Rousseau's own repudiation of original sin.

CHAPTER IV

NIETZSCHE ON RENAN

> Or le livre le plus important du XIX siècle devrait avoir pour titre: Histoire critique des origines due christianisme.
> --Renan, L'Avenir de la science.[1]
>
> Damit, dass man nach den Anfangen sucht, wird man Krebs. Der Historiker sieht rückwarts, endlich glaubt er auch rückwarts.
> --Nietzsche, Gotzen-Dammerung.[2]

Among the more colorful aspects of French intellectual life during the final decade of the Second Empire and the first decade of the Third Republic were the dîners chez Magny, semi-monthly supper parties held by some of the most celebrated writers of the day at the Magny restaurant in Paris. The candid discussions which were held have been recorded, if with something less than total accuracy, in the Journal of Edmond and Jules (de) Goncourt. Nietzsche did not look favorably upon the Goncourt brothers. He had listed them under "My Impossible Ones" in Twilight, metaphorising them as " the two Ajaxes in struggle with Homer,"[3] and, to recite the "Rousseau family" letter to Peter Gast, had termed them "the least sophisticated Romantics." Yet when the Journal was made public, he numbered among its more eager if unsympathetic readers. As he had already written to Gast on November 10, 1887, exactly two weeks before the

letter on Rousseau:

> The second volume of the Journal des Goncourts [sic] has appeared: the most interesting new publication. It covers the years 1862-1865; here the famous dîners chez Magny are described most vividly, those dîners at which the cleverest and most skeptical Parisian spirits of that time assembled twice a month (Sainte-Beuve, Flaubert, Theopile Gautier, Taine, Renan, the Goncourts, Scherer, Gavani, occasionally Turgenev, etc.). Exasperated pessimism, cynicism, and nihilism, alternating with much exuberance and good humor; I myself shouldn't fit in badly at all. I know these gentlemen by heart, so well that I am really weary of them. One must be more radical; at bottom they all lack the same thing--"la force."[4]

These remarks about the Magny "gentlemen" comprise, relatively-speaking, the kindest things Nietzsche ever said about any one of them. His momentary longing to be among them reflects his conviction that "as an artist, one has no home except in Paris. . . . I believe only in French culture, and consider everything else in Europe today that calls itself 'culture' a misunderstanding."[5] Their lack of la force, a fault mentioned rather politely in his letter to Gast, was not so casually treated elsewhere in his writings. The Parisians, no less than Wagner, symbolized the decadence which in his opinion characterized contemporary Europe; for "the France of the spirit is also the France of pessimism. . . . Paris is the real soil for Wagner."[6] Notes of the year 1887, labelling the dîners chez Magny as one of the chief symptoms of pessimism" and its participants as "nothing but

spiritual gourmets with indigestion,"[7] illustrate the diagnosis of decadence which, even before reading the Journal des Goncourt, he had already made in Beyond Good and Evil: "The sickness of the will is spread unevenly over Europe; it appears strongest and most manifold where culture has been at home longest. . . . In France today, the will is accordingly most seriously sick."[8] His comments on all of the more important thinkers whom Nietzsche notes as attending these dinners are offered, at one point or another in his writings, as case-studies of this "sickness of the will." Sainte-Beuve and the Goncourts are disciples of Rousseau; Taine's Hegelianism is an example of how the older French generation has been "corrupted by German philosophy;"[9] there exist deep resemblances between Flaubert's literature and Wagner's music.[10] Outside of the Magny group, Hugo, another of the "impossible ones,"[11] and Comte, "who wanted to lead his Frenchmen to Rome via the detour of science,"[12] could be taken as equally prominent examples of sick-willed Frenchmen. But the case of Ernest Renan offers an unusually revealing instance of Nietzsche's views on decadence. In him more than in any other thinker, Nietzsche uncovered evidence of how the nineteenth-century critical spirit--and more specifically, the historical spirit--had been abused and enervated.

During the 1880's, Nietzsche devoted much time to a study of Renan's work. His letter of February 1887 to Franz Overbeck, whose reviews of the successive volumes of

the Origines du christianisme had appeared in the Literarisches Centralblatt, testified that he had been reading Renan's series that previous winter.[13] Since by that time all seven volumes had been published (the last, Marc-Aurele, in 1882), Nietzsche might well have read the entire work. At any rate, he certainly knew the first, third, and fifth volumes. In his Antichrist, written precisely a quarter-century after the publication of Renan's classic, he quoted and discussed parts of Vie de Jésus.[14] An 1873 letter to Wagner indicates that he sent a copy of Saint Paul to Wagner's wife Cosima.[15] Gabriel Monod had supplied Nietzsche and friends with Les Evangiles upon the book's publication in the winter of 1876-77.[16] Allusions in Antichrist to Renan's interpretation of Jewish history[17] suggest that he was acquainted with the earlier part of Histoire du peuple d'Israel, a five-volume series of which the first two volumes had appeared by late 1888. The presence of Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse and of a German translation of Dialogue et fragments philosophiques in his library[18] is evidence that Nietzsche had some familiarity with Renan's non-historical work. Certainly, he had read the lengthy article on Renan in Paul Bourget's Essais de psychologie contemporaine[19] and, of course, would have encountered Renan in the pages of the Journal des Goncourt.[20]

Nietzsche's earliest remark on Renan, an 1884 note that paired Ranke and Renan as "these 'objective'

gentlemen with weak wills,"[21] foreshadowed Nietzsche's image of the author of Vie de Jésus later presented in his writings--that of an intellectually impotent historian holding a warped vision of the past and a false set of values. His first published reference to Renan, an especially significant one in that it linked Renan to two other major French thinkers of the time, occurred in Beyond Good and Evil:

> How strangely pious for our taste are even the most recent French skeptics insofar as they have any Celtic blood! How Catholic, how un-German Auguste Comte's sociology smells to us with its Roman logic of the instincts! How Jesuitical that gracious and clever cicerone of Port-Royal, Sainte-Beuve, in spite of all his hostility against the Jesuits! And especially Ernest Renan: how inaccessible the language of such a Renan sounds to us northerners; at one instant after another some nothing of religious tension unbalances his soul, which is, in the more refined sense, voluptuous and inclined to stretch out comfortably. Let us speak after him these beautiful sentences--and how much malice and high spirits stir immediately in our probably less beautiful and harder, namely more German, souls as a response:
>
> "Disons donc hardiment que la religion est un produit de l'homme normal, que l'homme est le plus dans le vrai quand il est le plus religieux et le plus assuré d'une destinée infinie. . . . C'est quand il est bon qu'il veut que la vertu corresponde à un ordre éternel, c'est quand il contemple les choses d'une manière désintéressée qu'il trouve la mort révoltante et absurde. Comment ne pas supposer que c'est dans ces moments-là, que l'homme voit le mieux?"
>
> These sentences are so antipodal to my ears and habits that on finding them my first wrath wrote in the margin "la niaiserie religieuse par excellence!"

> But my subsequent wrath actually 'took a fancy' to them--these sentences standing truth on her head! It is so neat, so distinguished to have one's own antipodes.[22]

Nietzsche no doubt took "these beautiful sentences" from Bourget's essay, which had quoted them (without documentation) from Renan's 1860 essay, "L'Avenir religieux des societés modernes,"[23] originally published in the Revue des Deux Mondes and later collected into his Questions contemporaines (1868). Nietzsche's description of Renan's style is unwittingly ironic; in spite of all Renan's attempts to identify himself with German Protestant scholarship, his language proved "inaccessible" to the Germans. The reasons for Nietzsche's "wrath" are obvious; a mere reading of the Renan passage he cited sufficed to arouse his malice, a malice expressed in even stronger terms in his next book, On the Genealogy of Morals. It was not so much Renan individually whom Nietzsche attacked here as it was the type of historian whom he took Renan to represent:

> I know of nothing that excites such disgust as this kind of "objective" armchair scholar, this kind of scented voluptuary of history, half-parson, half-satyr, perfume by Renan, who betrays immediately with the high falsetto of his applause what he lacks, where he lacks it, where in this case the Fates have applied their cruel shears with, alas, such surgical skill! . . . why did nature give me my foot? . . . for kicking to pieces these rotten armchairs, this cowardly contemplativeness, this lascivious historical eunuchism, this flirting with ascetic ideals, this justice-tartuffery of impotence![24]

Taken by itself, this assault on "historical eunuchism" tells us little about Nietzsche's objections to nineteenth-century historians nor does it offer us reasons for his contempt of Renan. But taken alongside an earlier essay, its meaning begins to surface. In his "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life," the second of the Untimely Meditations, Nietzsche set forth what in effect comprised a preliminary discourse about the historical discipline.[25] His criticism, opening with a complaint about the preoccupation with and excessiveness of historical research in his day, widened into an attack on the prevailing nineteenth-century philosophy of history. To be more specific, he attacked the idea of "progress" and the idea that "the masses" or "humanity," were the paramount forces which moved history. Contrary to Hegel and Hartmann, the two thinkers whom his essay took as examples, Nietzsche argued that the meaning of history did not lie in any dialectical movement toward a greater elevation of mankind in general. Positive value must not be assigned to historical events merely because they involve the participation of the masses, nor does movement in time lead to the creation of higher values. Christianity had certainly not marked any progress beyond the Greeks, nor had the French Revolution beyond the Renaissance. Nietzsche's rejection of the "world-process" philosophy of history, as he referred to it, can be summed up in the Meditation's aphorism "the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end, but

only in its highest specimens."[26]

These words are indispensable for an understanding of Nietzsche's view of history and of historians like Renan. Indeed, as Kaufmann has written, "perhaps there is no more basic statement of Nietzsche's philosophy in all his writings than this sentence."[27] Historical value judgements, Nietzsche insisted, had to be defined in terms of the rare and unique individual whose example for mankind is timeless --"supra-historical," to use his term. (Socrates and Goethe were such examples.) Used as a means for glorifying the abstraction "humanity," the historical discipline had a dangerously enfeebling effect upon civilization. In professing that history is the work of the masses, a historian enfeebles himself. It is in this context that the metaphor of the "rotten armchairs" and the cutting remarks about Renan's intellectual castration start to assume significance. Nietzsche's revulsion at Renan's historical evaluations obviously had something to do with Renan's interpretation of the origins of Christianity, but just what that something was, Nietzsche did not here specify.

His letter to Overbeck in February 1887, the period of the Genealogy, was no more precise. His recent reading of the Origines du christianisme had been undertaken "with much malice and little profit," Nietzsche asserted to his friend. Renan's history "seems to me to hang comically in the air." So suspicious of modern historiography had Renan made him that he wondered "whether [the writing of] history

is even possible. What is it that he wants to determine? Something that at its moment of happening was itself undetermined?"[28] In notes of the same period, echoing the "scented voluptuary" reference in the Genealogy, Nietzsche complained that "effeminate, indefinite, candyish aroma [weichlich-unbestimmte Bonbon-Geruch] of Renan is unacceptable to my nostrils." He chided Renan as "uncertain and wavering, flitting like a bee from flower to flower."[29] It is in his final remarks on Renan, in Twilight of the Idols and Antichrist, that we can identify more precisely these cheap odours and vague inconsistencies for which Nietzsche condemned Renan's historical work. A passage in Twilight is the longest and probably most important comment Nietzsche made about Renan:

> Renan. Theology: or the corruption of reason by "original sin" (Christianity). Witness Renan who, whenever he risks a Yes or No of a more general nature, scores a miss with painful regularity. He wants, for example, to weld together la science and la noblesse, but la science belongs with democracy; what could be plainer? With no little ambition, he wishes to represent an aristocracy of the spirit, yet at the same time he is on his knees before its very counter-doctrine, the evangile des humbles--and not on his knees. To what avail is all free-spiritedness, modernity, mockery, and wry-necked suppleness, if in one's guts one is still a Christian, a Catholic--in fact, a priest! Renan is most inventive, just like a Jesuit and father confessor, when it comes to seduction; his spirituality does not even lack the broad, fat, popish smile--like all priests, he becomes dangerous when he loves. Nobody can equal him when it comes to adoring in a manner endangering life itself. This

> spirit of Renan's, a spirit which is enervated, is one more calamity for poor, sick, will-sick France.[30]

This polemic provides an excellent indication of the basic difference between Nietzsche's and Renan's respective casts of mind. An attempt at a synthesis of the critical and religious spirits, the very thing which Renan had deemed the most urgent task of the nineteenth-century mind, represented for Nietzsche the worst sort of intellectual prostitution. His words about the corruption of Renan's reason are somewhat similar to his remarks in Antichrist on another Frenchman whom he believed was ruined by Chistianity, Pascal.[31] His mockery of Renan's failure to arrive at any real Yes or No recalls the flitting-bee metaphor earlier used to characterize his inconclusiveness. To Nietzsche, Renan's aristocratic pretentions looked ridiculous in light of Renan's faith both in la science and in the évangile des humbles, both of which, to Nietzsche's mind, were at odds with any real nobility of the spirit.[32] Those "beautiful sentences" he had contemptuously cited in Beyond Good and Evil no doubt lay at the back of his mind while he described Renan as a Jesuit and a seducer, and his words about the danger of adoration echo his marginal comments about niaiserie religieuse. He was suspicious that this ex-seminarian's alleged free-thinking did more to bind men to faith than to encourage them in freedom of thought. Renan had masked his religion with good scholarly intentions, and in this way lured the unwitting into his system of

Christian apologetics. He claimed to be offering a fresh and healthy dish of critical inquiry, when all the time he was serving up a warmed-over, poisonous Christianity.

Nietzsche's polemic against Renan must be read while keeping in mind what Renan had actually tried to do in the Origines du christianisme. Renan's purpose had been not only to strip away the supernatural but to show how the great moral example of Jesus's life and legend fulfilled a deeply-felt religious yearning in the masses living within the Empire. Renan's attitude toward Christianity was far from unambiguous (thus Nietzsche's complaints about inconsistency and inconclusiveness). The Origines often leaves the impression that the superstition and fanaticism present in early Christian teachings outweighed the moral and aesthetic benefits offered civilization by Jesus's life and the gospel literature. Yet in the final analysis, it seems that Renan felt himself obliged to recognize the birth and growth of Christianity as an admirable triumph of the popular will over the Imperial will, as a great world-historical act carried out by the masses of the faithful who had found in Christianity a religion of hope that the Empire could not provide. In this manner, he felt Christianity to be a movement of progress. As he argued in the preface to his Histoire du peuple d'Israel,[33] Christianity had evolved from the old Jewish-prophetic idea of social justice; but unlike ancient Judaism, Christianity spoke to all of mankind, not merely to a chosen people. It offered a self-

vindication by granting immortality of the soul, rather than mere wordly justice. Such historical interpretation was precisely the type which Nietzsche had condemned in the second of the Untimely Meditations and of which in the first of four references to Renan in Antichrist, he specifically accused the author of the Origines and Israel. In its appeal to the weak and the sick, Nietzsche affirmed, Christianity represented decadence, not progress. The Hebrew God-idea, symbolizing a national aggressiveness and vigour, had degenerated into the Christian God, signifying an enfeeblement of the will to power. Thus he wondered:

> How can anyone today still submit to the simplicity of Christian theologians to the point of insisting with them that the development of the conception of God from the "God of Israel," the god of a people, to the Christian God, the quintessence of everything good, represents progress [Fortschritt]? Yet even Renan does this. As if Renan had the right to be simple-minded! After all, the opposite stares you in the face.[34]

The invectives Nietzsche hurled at Renan have to be read as a rebuttal to this variety of a philosophy of history. It was this view of Christianity as a progressive work of "humanity" that spurred Nietzsche's charges of intellectual castration, vulgar perfumes, dangerous adoration and simple-mindedness in Renan's historical writing. One can imagine the feelings that would have stirred in Nietzsche as he read these lines from the concluding pages of the Origines du christianisme:

> . . . In the record of history, Christianity is the most striking of endeavours to beget an idea of enlightenment [lumière] and justice. . . . in time, [it] became the collective effort of humanity, each race endowing it with a special talent. . . . [it] is, in fact, the religion of civilized peoples. . . . Thus, let us preserve Christianity, admiring its high moral values, its majestic history, the beauty of its sacred books. . . . The creators of Christianity stand in the first rank of those to whom humanity owes veneration. . . . A banding-together of the weak [association des faibles] provides a just solution to the majority of problems raised by [the need for] an organization of humanity; this is a matter on which Christianity can serve as an example for eternity.[35]

In the image of Jesus which Renan had presented in the first volume of the Origines, Nietzsche uncovered further weaknesses of historical judgement:

> M. Renan, that buffoon in psychologicis, has introduced the two most inappropriate concepts possible into his explanation of the Jesus-type: the concept of the genius [Genie] and the concept of the hero ("heros") [Held]. But if anything is unevangelical it is the concept of the hero. Just the opposite of all wrestling, of all feeling-oneself-in-a-struggle has here become instinct: the incapacity for resistance becomes morality here ("resist not evil"--perhaps the most profound word of the gospels, their key in a certain sense), blessedness in peace, in gentleness. . . . Everyone is the child of God --Jesus definitely presumes nothing for himself alone--and as a child of God everyone is equal to everyone. To make a hero of Jesus. And even more, what a misunderstanding of the word "genius". . . . Spoken with the precision of a

> psychologist, even an entirely different word would be still more nearly fitting here--the word *idiot* [*das Wort Idiot*].[36]

Renan, of course, did not undertake any extended psychological study of Jesus as "genius" or "hero." The text of *Vie de Jésus* employs the words *génie* and *héros* only a few times, and even then rather offhandedly and without definition.[37] Such casual application of these terms to Jesus nevertheless sufficed to arouse Nietzsche, just as further along in *Antichrist*, he rebelled at Renan's use of the word *impérieux* to describe "the Redeemer-type."[38] Aversion to struggle and equality before God as preached by the gospels contradicted the idea of heroism. The anti-egalitarianism Nietzsche here expresses brings sharply to mind his derisive passage on Rousseau and the French Revolution in *Twilight*. His remarks on Rousseau bear on his discussion of Renan in *Antichrist* in that, building up to his polemic against Rousseau in *Twilight*, Nietzsche sets forth his definition of genius, thereby adumbrating the grounds for his objections to Renan's use of the word. The relationship between a genius and his milieu, Nietzsche had asserted, was like that between the strong and the weak. The strong must surmount, not descend to, the weak. Similarly, a genius must transcend, not express, his milieu. In contemporary France, different opinions were held on this matter; the "'milieu theory'" of the French "'smells bad'" [*riecht nicht gut*].[39] Not only does this allusion to bad odours recall his earlier remarks respecting Renan, but the

"milieu theory" he had in mind, a theory most prominently developed by Taine's celebrated notion of le race, le moment et le milieu, could well be exemplified by Renan's image of Jesus.[40] Renan pictured the Nazarene very much along the lines of Taine's critical method, at least insofar as he emphasized Jesus's psychological and physical surroundings as determinative factors in his teachings.[41] This humble Nazarene carpenter, otherwise destined for obscurity, had been born at a time when the theological and political tensions of Israel were giving rise to messianic hopes which "were fermenting in the heads of everyone; men believed themselves on the eve of a great renewal."[42] It was the "delightful pastoral"[43] of the gentle, dreamy Galilean countryside, with its scenes of simple peasants sensing an immediacy with nature, from which Jesus drew his inspiration. It was "in his beloved Galilee [that] he found his Heavenly Father, in the midst of green hills and clear fountains, among crowds of women and children who, with a joyous soul and angel-song in their hearts, awaited the salvation of Israel."[44] But a "milieu-theory" critique such as Renan attempted to apply to Jesus formed the very antithesis of Nietzsche's conception of genius which held that "great men are necessary, the age in which they appear is accidental."[45]

And Jesus as "idiot"? As Kaufmann has pointed out, the description was almost certainly suggested to Nietzsche by Dostoyevsky's novel of that name.[46] In

Twilight, he hailed the Russian as "the only psychologist . . . from whom I had anything to learn"[47]--in contrast to Renan, "that buffoon in psychologicis." The milieu of Jesus's life, painted by Renan as a sort of lyrical pastoral with elements of a passion-play, represented for Nietzsche a theatre of the pathological:

> That queer and sick world into which the gospels introduce us--as in a Russian novel, a world in which the scum of society, nervous disorders, and "child-like" idiocy seem to be having a rendez-vous. . . . It is regrettable that a Dostoyevsky did not live near this most interesting of all decadents [i.e, Jesus]--I mean someone who would have known how to sense the very stirring charm of such a mixture of the sublime, the sickly, and the childlike.[48]

By his attraction to this child-like idiot who symbolized all the wretchedness of the weak and the sick, Renan had betrayed his emasculated historical perspective. That he should have been drawn to such decadence, and that he should actually interpret it as genius and heroism, as something praiseworthy, proved that Renan himself was a decadent. This argument with Renan's portrait of Jesus is what lay at the roots of Nietzsche's scorn for the author of the Origines du christianisme.

But despite the divergences between his and Renan's conceptions of Jesus, Nietzsche's Antichrist did manage to accomodate at least one parallel with Vie de Jésus. In the same section alluding to Dostoyevsky's Idiot, Nietzsche again cited Renan:

> Meanwhile there is a gaping contradiction between the sermonizer on the mount, lake, and meadow, whose appearance seems like that of a Buddha on soil that is not at all Indian, and that fanatic of aggression, that mortal enemy of theologians and priests, whom Renan's malice has glorified as le [sic] grand maître en ironie.[49]

Renan's phrase, occurring in the last paragraph of Chapter XX of Vie de Jésus, had served to conclude his characterization of Jesus's attitude toward the Pharisees, an attitude of "exquisite mockeries [and] malicious provocations."[50] In much the same fashion as Nietzsche, Renan had perceived a lack of harmony between the sermonizer and the fanatic:

> He was no longer the gentle teacher of the Sermon on the Mount. . . . The passion underlying his character drove him to the most stinging invectives . . . several of the recommendations which he addressed to his disciples contained the germs of a real fanataicism.[51]

Nor should Nietzsche's spite for the author of the Origines be allowed to obscure still-other parallels between his and Renan's conceptions of early Christianity.[52] Both writers deplored Saint Paul's perversion of the simple teachings of Jesus into vast metaphysical systems, in which the idea of Jesus's death on the cross and the subsequent myth of the resurrection became more important than the memory of his actual life. Both sought to emphasize the role of the downtrodden masses of the Roman Empire in providing adherents for the new faith, and the consequent

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weakening of the Empire's political structure by the demands for total allegiance made by Christianity on its growing number of followers. Like Renan, Nietzsche stressed how the ever-increasing antagonism between the classical culture of the Roman upper classes and the anti-intellectual egalitarian plebeianism of the Christian communities led to dire results for the civilization of antiquity. But these resemblances are rather superficial and, in any case, the notions they represent hardly signify any exclusive or original contribution to a critical examination of the origins of Christianity. Pointing to a much more striking similarity between Nietzsche and Renan, Charles Andler had speculated "whether Nietzsche is not indebted to Renan's prose for the idea of his also raising a hammer against hollow idols."[53] Subtitled "how one philosophises with a hammer,"[54] Nietzsche's Twilight of the Idols is prefaced with the warning:

> This essay is a great declaration of war, and regarding the sounding-out of idols, this time they are not just idols of the age, but eternal idols, which are here touched with a hammer as with a tuning-fork; there are altogether no more older, no more convinced, no more puffed-up idols--and none more hollow.[55]

This striking assertion of iconoclasm reads like a parody of one of the most famous passages in Renan's Origines, where, in Volume III, Saint-Paul, he relates the story of Paul's coming to Athens and his confrontation with the statues of the Greek deities:

> Ah, beautiful and chaste images, true gods and goddesses; behold he who will raise the hammer against you; the fatal word is pronounced; you are false idols; this small, ugly Jew will be your death-sentence.[56]

And, as Andler has wondered, did Renan's fourth volume, Antéchrist, perhaps inspire the title for Nietzsche's own book?[57] In any event, a statement of the precise extent to which Renan can be said to have influenced Nietzsche's conception of early Christianity would entail a close side-by-side reading of Renan's Origines, and even the earlier part of Israel, with Nietzsche's Antichrist and the so-called "Journal of the Antichrist"[58] in Book Two of The Will to Power. What can be concluded with certainty is that Renan did exercise a considerable impact upon Nietzsche insofar as his work stimulated and reinforced Nietzsche's polemic against Christianity, against the historians of "humanity," and against the decadence of nineteenth-century French intellectual life.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Insofar as it operated upon dialectical premises, Renan's historical system was representative of the predominant tendencies of nineteenth-century thought. Like Hegel, Comte, Proudhon, Marx or Spencer, Renan visualised history as a process of opposing forces that gradually resolved themselves into a higher unity. The conflicts of men, social classes and ideas continuously worked themselves out into successive equilibriums in which previously-existing antitheses were dissolved into new and progressive syntheses.

Drawing analogies in his Origines du christianisme between early Christianity and the French eighteenth century, Renan illustrated how this process of synthesis was brought about. The nascent Church had emerged as the product of both Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's influences, despite the contradictions between Jewish-based, conservative teaching on the one hand and a more universal, revolutionary message on the other. These contradictions were subordinate to the common Christian achievement which was generated. In much the same manner, posterity regarded the French Revolution less as a conflict between Danton and Robespierre than as a great historical event which had merged the opposing impacts of the two. And, by the same standard, the popular mind of Renan's time thought of "Voltaire and Rousseau," attaching

less importance to the battles between the two than to how both men shared honours as the two most powerful thinkers of their time.[1]

In this sense, despite the criticisms he levelled at Christianity, at the French Revolution, and at Voltaire and Rousseau, Renan still interpreted them all as forces of progress. To the extent that they had all encouraged innovations in men's ideas and actions, they had all played a positive role in the forward march of humanity. Voltaire, notwithstanding his historical short-mindedness, had made an ameliorative contribution to mankind not only through the example of his humanitarianism but also through his work in liberating the human consciousness from clerical deadweights. Nor did Renan's reservations about Rousseau and the French Revolution prevent him from acknowledging their donations to the cause of progress. It is revealing that Renan complained about the vitriolic attack on the Revolution in Taine's Origines de la France contemporaine. Taine, he affirmed, had shown the Revolution only in its ugliness and shame; he had ignored "its grandiose, heroic, sublime side."[2]

The outlines of a whole philosophy of history are implied by Renan's views of the French eighteenth century, as they are by Nietzsche's. A comparison between the two thinkers in this context yields differences no less significant than does the more immediate, explicit conflict of their views on the origins of Christianity. A super-

ficial parallel could be drawn here between Nietzsche and Renan insofar as both feared the democratic egalitarianism allegedly preached by Rousseau and practised by the Revolution in its more radical stages. However, Renan never identified Rousseau with Robespierre and the mobs, as did Nietzsche; Renan even had occasional words of praise for Rousseau. Free of the ambivalence of Renan's attitude, one which both deprecated and applauded the era, Nietzsche's critique of eighteenth-century France expressed not an idea of progress but a diagnosis of decadence. In the clash of Voltaire's seventeenth-century aristocratic classicism with Rousseau's plebeian Romanticism, Nietzsche discovered the source of the intellectual decline of France--indeed, of Europe--in his own century, a decline in which Renan exercised a leading part. Just as Rousseau had born responsibility for inspiring "the last great slave rebellion"[3] of modern times, the French Revolution, Renan was guilty of trying to rehabilitate the great slave rebellion of antiquity, Christianity. Just as Rousseau's morality of "nature" had acted as a mask for his Christianity, Renan's endeavour at "objective" history functioned to disguise his Jesuit-like seductions. If Rousseau provided Nietzsche with a symbol of the modern herd-man, sick with <u>ressentiment</u>, Renan served him as no less fitting a symbol of the priest who, with his cunning and deceitful explanations, fed religion to the herd.

Nietzsche and Renan differed radically not only

in their estimations of Christianity and the French eighteenth century, but at an even more basic level, in their conceptions of the nature of the critical spirit. While Renan interpreted the proper task of nineteenth-century criticism as a striving for synthesis and harmony, Nietzsche interpreted it in terms of an unrestricted, atomizing iconoclasm. To Nietzsche, religious sympathies, however limited, had no place in the methods of a critical spirit. True freedom of mind could not allow for any condescension to faith nor could it permit any favorable convictions about morality or "humanity." This is why Voltaire, who was too iconoclastic for Renan, was insufficiently so for Nietzsche. Linking him backward in time to Newton's Deism and forward to Comte's Cult of Humanity, Nietzsche held that Voltaire had not gone far enough in emancipating science from Christianity. Renan, measuring his values in terms of "humanity," a theme which Nietzsche despised, hoped for a reconciliation between skepticism and belief, debunkery and tradition, Enlightenment and Catholicism. His critique of Voltaire provided the primary expression of this attempt at reconciliation. In short, as Jean Guehénno has put it, Renan "had convinced himself that the most critical of men could be the most religious."[4] Renan's notion of <u>la science</u> demanded precisely what Nietzsche rejected; all aspects of the human experience must be given a fair hearing, urged Renan. Religious myth as well as objective circumstance had to be taken into account in any endeavour to construct

an image of the past and an ideal for the future. Only in this fashion could one "comprehend humanity" (comprendre l'humanité)--and by "comprehend," Renan meant both all-inclusiveness and understanding.[5]

This yearning for organic totality, typical of the century, stood in sharp contrast to Nietzsche's nihilistic chaos--nihilistic because it denied the validity of any supra-individual standard of values, chaotic because it precluded any attempt to read pattern or order into history.[6] Only individual self-affirmation mattered to a Nietzschean free-spirit; history and humanity, as abstractions, did not. The critical mind of Nietzsche's ideal would advocate an overcoming of history, in the sense that Goethe had "overcome" the eighteenth century and Romanticism, accomplishing an artistic self-creation that became a timeless, eternal example above and beyond the confines of history. To follow Renan in advocating religion as a meaningful aspect of the human achievement would have meant betraying the real duty of the critical spirit. Renan to the contrary, this duty entailed not synthesis but fragmentation, a repudiation of all that smelled of "the herd" (i.e., of "humanity"). Religion, the vilest of herd-instincts, could not be tolerated by a Nietzschean free-spirit seeking his ends beyond good and evil. Renan's world-view urged a serious, "objective" accounting of religion in the interest of constructing a version of history which emphasized the creative role of religious faith. Philosophy may suffice for the

the intellectual community, as Renan noted near the end of Vie de Jésus, but "philosophy is not enough for the majority of men." The masses needed sainthood, and this need explained why the example of Jesus's life had continued to sway men even in the nineteenth century. "Jesus has left humanity with an inexhaustible principle of moral regeneration."[7] In Saint-Paul, Renan had described how classical antiquity's intellectual elite had ignored and scorned the rapid growth of Christianity in the first century A.D. Reflecting not just upon this but also upon the relationship of the critical life with mass-movements in his own generation, he insisted: "when philosophy declares that it is indifferent to religion, religion replies by stifling it, and this is justice; for philosophy has value only if it gives humanity direction (montre a l'humanité sa voie)."[8]

But it is worthwhile to provide such guidance only if one assumes that humanity is moving in the general direction of progress. Though Renan may have held such an assumption, Nietzsche certainly did not. Renan no doubt envisioned himself as one of those philosophers who, because he sympathised with the religious impulse in the lives of common men, would be a mentor of humanity's spiritual future. Nietzsche possessed no such desire to be a leader. While the utopian author of L'Avenir de la science identified his own intellectual mission with the good of humanity as a whole, the iconoclastic apostle of the will to power sought his self-affirmation in terms of the fullest possible separation

from "the steam and filth of human lowlands."[9] The one endeavoured to find personal significance by sublimating his creative powers into the history of humanity, the other to find his by transcending the notion of "humanity."

Their respective appreciations of Voltaire serve to dramatize this point. The Voltaire whom Renan admired, the apostle of social and scientific progress, stood at the very apex of the eighteenth century. Deeply immersed in the social and political problems of his day, Renan's Voltaire advocated tolerance and humanitarianism. Despite his extended critique of Voltaire's failure to understand the merits of religious faith properly, Renan still upheld him as a philosopher-guide of humanity. Nietzsche's idea of Voltaire, on the other hand, stressed his role as "the last of the great dramatists." It was Voltaire's unique, individual self-creation that enthused Nietzsche. Much less interpreting him as a typical expression of what was enlightened in his century, as did Renan, Nietzsche viewed Voltaire as a figure surpassing his time, as a lonely monument of classical virtue in an age rendered decadent by Rousseau and Romanticism. Thus, to the extent that they both had an at least partially positive attitude toward him, both Nietzsche and Renan in a sense cast Voltaire in the image of their respective selves.

Yet Renan's eagerness to see philosophy give leadership to humanity did not imply a belief that humanity itself could become philosophical. In spite of his

professions respecting the brotherhood of humanity, one would certainly hesitate to call Renan any sort of democrat. His reluctantly-expressed statement of anti-egalitarianism in the 1890 Introduction to L'Avenir de la science and his urging of an aristocratically-based constitutional monarchy in La Réforme intellectuelle et morale betrayed his fear of the common man, a fear which had lead him to repudiate "the revolutionary school" of Rousseau. The experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 severely shook him, as it did Taine. Unlike Taine, however, Renan did not react by concluding that the whole French political experiment inaugurated in 1789 had been a mistake. Furthermore, he did not approve of Thiers's unduly harsh reprisals against the Communards.[10] Still, the events of 1871 acted as a catalyst for his elitist political and social views, and his suspicions about the common man's threat to civilized behaviour now turned into convictions. As a historian, Renan may have found some occasion to praise the role of the unphilosophical hordes in the spontaneous making of great historical movements like Christianity. As a thinker living in the last third of the nineteenth century, however, he was quite aware that his generation was witness to an emerging novelty in civilization: the phenomenon of "mass-man."

The later nineteenth century, Ortega y Gasset has argued, marked "a radical innovation in human destiny." Through the convergence of liberal democracy, scientific advance, and industrialism, the European social order of

that time found itself in an unprecedented situation. The "average man" of that time, he wrote, was the first average man in history "who finds no social barriers raised against him." This new shape of things, Ortega continued, has endangered civilization itself. The pressures brought to bear by mass-man upon society have tended to preclude all forms of unique self-assertion and of individual excellence. This new common man, ascending to social power in the later nineteenth century, has remained blindly ignorant of the fragile character of modern civilization. He has assumed that the material wealth he enjoys is a product of spontaneous natural forces. His inability to appreciate what is rare and what is refined in historic culture, as well as his incapacity to realize the ominous possibilities that his type has created for the future of civilized society, reveal him as "a primitive who has slipped through the wings onto the age-old stage of civilization."[11] Renan, gaining his full intellectual stature at the very time when Ortega's "mass-man" was really beginning to play a visible role in European civilization, shared apprehensions very much like the ones Ortega expressed a half-century later. This more general worry about the fate of civilization in an age of mass-society, when merged with the more immediate political disillusionments created in him by the Franco-Prussian war and its aftermath, produced what has to be Renan's strangest piece of writing: the Dialogues philosophiques.[12]

Written in 1871 but published only five years

later, these "dialogues" represent Renan's boldest attempt at prophecy. Mass-man, made powerful by the levelling doctrines of the nineteenth century like democracy and socialism, imperilled la science and progress itself. In contrast to the enthusiasm of 1848 and L'Avenir de la science, an enthusiasm that had held all mankind capable of acquiring la science, Renan now interpreted la science as possible only in terms of a kind of "aristocratic messianism."[13]

The Dialogues assemble a group of Greek thinkers in Versailles where they discuss the prospects for humanity. Renan builds his prophecy under three headings: Certitudes, Probabilités and Rêves. The chief "certainty" agreed upon by his dialogists is that history has a purpose--a typical nineteenth-century belief--but other than expressing a vague hope that la science will become omnipotent as the organizing force of mankind, this purpose is unclear. Man's striving toward a historical goal, said Renan, resembled the weaving of a Gobelin tapestry, where the artisan weaves on the cloth's reverse side without seeing the emerging design.[14] The dominant "probability" is that this hidden God of la science may require that his designs for humanity be carried out by an elite. In other words, the continuing advance of intellectual life and the direction of humanity by philosophy might entail that all social and political power be taken from the masses and invested in the hands of an aristocracy of super-minds. Moving onto his "dreams,"

Renan imagined the forms of behaviour which this aristocracy might have to take in order to preserve its cultural values. Perhaps it would be forced to resort to torture and terror in order to sustain itself;[15] the masses might have to be controlled with the threat of planetary destruction![16] This third section of the Dialogues could have been more accurately titled "nightmares"; no wonder Renan stated in his preface that no ideas offered by his imaginary Greek thinkers ought to be construed as necessarily representing the views of the author.[17]

Speculations interspersed throughout the Dialogues, particularly in Rêves, include ideas respecting some sort of genetic engineering, the physical immortalization of selected human brains, and the evolution of new animal, and even human, species. These speculations, claimed Charles Renouvier, bear several resemblances to the biological and futuristic conjectures of Diderot's Rêve de d'Alembert.[18] Renan's prophecies of an elitist super-humanity have impelled at least four critics to suggest that the Dialogues philosophiques exercised some impact upon Nietzsche's thinking.[19] One of these commentators has even gone so far as to insist that "if Nietzsche vilified Renan, it was in order to avoid having to acknowledge what his own aristocratic radicalism owed to the aristocratic dilletantism of the author of Dialogues philosophiques."[20] Caution must be taken in drawing any such parallels. The abhorrent political aspects of Renan's vision cannot be read into Nietzsche's concept

of a future aristocracy. Endeavours at such a reading have only produced the ridiculous and shameful interpretations that make Nietzsche into a proto-Nazi. Still, one cannot miss the distinctive Nietzschean sound of some statements by Théoctiste, protagonist of Renan's Reves. "It is much to be feared," warns Théoctiste, "that the last word of democracy . . . will be a social order where a degenerated mass would have no care other than indulging in the vile pleasures of the common herd-man [l'homme vulgaire]."[21] In striking anticipation of Nietzsche's celebrated aphorism in the second of the Untimely Meditations, he asserts, "in sum, the aim of humanity is to produce great men."[22] Pointing to Goethe, Theoctiste says, "the transcendent immorality of the artist is, in its way, a supreme morality."[23] Nietzsche's mockery in Twilight of Renan's desire "to weld together la science and la noblesse" might very well have been aimed at the Dialogues philosophiques. Yet Nietzsche's own conception of cultural heroism and of an elite of übermenschen perhaps had more affinities with Renan's noblesse than he was willing to admit. Looking to the future, both thinkers surely felt something of what Ortega meant when he wrote, "without a spiritual power, without someone to command, and in proportion as this is lacking, chaos reigns over mankind."[24]

Renan's prophecies, in one sense, contradict his history. The sympathy for common humanity and the moral earnestness evident in his Origines du Christianisme appear

to be absent from his Dialogues philosophiques. This apparent contradiction might be overlooked by simply interpreting Renan's "dreams" as an aberration from the more optimistic humanitarian thinking of his more extensive writings in historical philosophy. After all, the Rêves expressed only speculations and comprised only a miniscule part of Renan's work. But even apart from the Dialogues, Renan's basic seriousness and idealism did not survive intact in his later years. Nietzsche, who studied Renan primarily as a historian, failed to account for the increasingly skeptical and pessimistic attitude toward life which Renan displayed in many of his more casual, personal essays.

His contemporary William James, however, conceived of Renan almost exclusively in terms of such an attitude. Like Nietzsche, James considered Renan as an example of French intellectual decadence. On one occasion he matched Renan with Emile Zola as a symbol of the decay of the French Romantic movement born with Rousseau.[25]

More particularly, James's reasons for repudiating Renan were virtually the diametrical opposite of Nietzsche's. In contrast to Nietzsche, who castigated Renan for having conceded too much positive value to religious achievement, James attacked him for not showing enough respect for the believer's way of life. From the publication of Dialogues et fragments philosophiques onward, Renan's statements about human destiny tend to grow more and more flippant and irreverent. This flippancy so irked James that, in The

Varieties of Religious Experience, he paired Renan with Voltaire as an example of a thinker whose ultimate personal reaction to life forfeited any right to be called "religious." Citing representative words from the two Frenchmen's later works, James labelled their philosophies of life as characteristic of what he chose to call "the 'all-is-vanity' state of mind." "I can look upon the world as a farce, even when it becomes tragic, as it sometimes does"--he quotes Voltaire as writing. "There are many chances that the world may be nothing but a fairy pantomime of which no God has care"--writes Renan. As James insisted:

> There are trifling, sneering attitudes even towards the whole of life; and in some men these attitudes are final and systematic. It would strain the ordinary use of language too much to call such attitudes religious, even though, from the viewpoint of an unbiased critical philosophy, they might conceivably be perfectly reasonable ways of looking upon life. . . . For common men, "religion," whatever more special meanings it may have, signifies always a serious state of mind. If any one phrase could gather its universal meaning, that phrase would be, "all is not vanity in this Universe, whatever the appearances may suggest." If it can stop anything, religion as commonly apprehended can stop just such chaffing talk as Renan's. It favours gravity, not pertness; it says 'hush' to all vain chatter and smart wit.[26]

This "all-is-vanity" approach to life, which Renan held from the late 1870's on, can be traced to one principal cause. Richard Chadbourne, the leading American scholar on

Renan, has argued that this renanisme, as it came to be called by Renan's contemporaries, grew out of "his increasing fear of being duped."[27] The crisis of religious faith that he had undergone in 1845 left Renan frustrated. Quitting his training for the priesthood in that year, Renan had felt himself cheated by God. The faith imparted to him by his Catholic teachers had turned out to be insupportable in the light of critical inquiry. The most dramatic result of this loss of faith did not come about until almost two decades later in form of Vie de Jésus, when Renan endeavored to reinterpret Jesus not as the son of God but as a sort of folk hero. Through the middle decades of the century, he managed to cling to an idealism by replacing his lost Catholic beliefs with a faith in the God of Science. However, the political and social hopes that his generation had thought they saw being realized in the revolution of 1848 had soured by the time of the Second Empire's emergence three years later. Even more vital to his intellectual development were the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. The war, which shattered his vision of a Franco-German intellectual rapprochement in the interests of political harmony, weakened Renan's optimism about the future of Europe. The Germany whose "genius" he had so admired had revealed itself as a military brute. These setbacks, ones with consequences for him as profoundly emotional as philosophical, eventually caused Renan to doubt the validity of believing in anything: he did not want to be deceived

again by false hopes. Thus, although he generally managed to incorporate the notion of progress and a trust in humanity into his historical writings like the Origines and Israel, he did not altogether succeed in maintaining such optimistic convictions on a more intimately personal level. His youthful sobriety and idealism now tended to yield to a frivolous, mocking irony.

These disillusionments explain why, in addressing the Académie francaise in 1879, he could declare: "We find ourselves in the coterie of the age of Ecclesiastes, a charming age most fitting to our serene gaiety, when after a laborious youth one begins to see that all is vanity."[28] Speaking to a group of students in 1881, he advised them: "make way for a smile and for the hypothesis that the world may not be anything very serious. . . . old-fashioned Gallic gaiety is perhaps the most profound of all philosophies."[29] In his 1884 eulogy on the philosopher Amiel, the essay which had so disgusted James, he asserted: "We are resigned in advance to losing the interest on our investments of virtue, but we do not wish to appear ridiculous by having counted on them too securely."[30] Even in the last volume of the Origines, when vicariously reliving the Stoic resignation of the sage-emperor Marcus Aurelius, he had written that "the most solid goodness is that founded upon perfect weariness [ennui], upon the realization of the fact that everything in this world is frivolous and without real depth."[31]

The Renan exposed in these renaniste passages

bears an appearance quite unlike the one imputed to him by Nietzsche. The 'niaiserie religieuse' which Nietzsche had scorned in Beyond Good and Evil may have aptly described the words he quoted from Renan on that occasion, but those words dated back to 1860. His attack in Antichrist on Renan's portrait of Jesus may have been aimed at the over-indulgent reverence which he felt Renan to have displayed toward the Nazarene, but this reverence illustrated the Renan of 1863. The renaniste Renan of the late 1870's and the 1880's--the Renan contemporary to the books in which Nietzsche polemicized against him--does not accurately fit Nietzsche's description. In his Origines and Israel, this later Renan remained essentially conscious of the duties toward posterity which he felt to be incumbent upon him. Personal conviction aside, he felt obliged to offer humanity encouragement by means of his historical writings. But a picture of Renan drawn upon the basis of his historical optimism fails to offer a complete view of the man, a view which must account for the disillusioned Renan who is first uncovered in the Dialogues philosophiques. James, reviewing the Dialogues upon its publication in 1876, deplored the work as

> an example of mental ruin--the last expression of a nature in which the seed of insincerity and foppishness, which existed at the start alongside of splendid powers, have grown up like rank weeds and smothered the better possibilities. The dialogues ... . are simply prigishness rampant, an indescribable unmanliness of tone

> compounded of a sort of histronically sentimental self-conceit and a nerveless and boneless fear of what will become of the universe if "l'homme vulgaire" is allowed to go on. M. Renan's idea of God seems to be that of a power to whom one may successfully go like a tell-tale child and say: "Please, won't you make 'l'homme vulgaire' stop?" As the latter waxes everyday more fat and insolent, the belief in God grows dim, and is replaced by the idea of a kind of cold-blooded destiny whose inscrutable and inhuman purposes we are blindly serving. . . .[32]

James's estimate rightly pointed to the intellectual dilemma which Renan had brought upon himself. Because he could not effectively reconcile himself to the idea of mass-society, Renan's idealism started to buckle under the growing pressure of his apprehensions about the future. These apprehensions, stemming mostly from the "fear of being duped" that underlay his later renanisme, weakened his response to the challenge of modern times. In seeking to resolve the intellectual and political revolutions rooted in the French eighteenth century, Renan never fully managed to build a stable synthesis. He endeavored to harmonize the de-Christianizing critical spirit of the Enlightenment with a religious sentiment of "the infinite"; but, as James remarked, he wound up advertising "a cold-blooded destiny." His attempt to come to terms with the Enlightenment's separation of humanity from Providence had, by the last quarter of the century, degenerated to the point where he often found it difficult to have genuine faith in mankind's potential for self-realisation. In conjunction with this, his ambition to

preserve the ethical and aesthetic values of Christianity by means of his historical studies became suspect. To what avail was an appreciation of religion, if all religious values, like all secular values, turned out to be worthless? Much of his talk about "the infinite" developed into little more than rhetoric. As James put it on the occasion of Renan's death, "he leviated at last to his true level of superficiality, . . . finally using the old moral and religious vocabulary to produce merely musical and poetic effects."[33] Renan's cry of "all is vanity" was not only an echo from the youthful days when God had first "duped" him. It was also the ennui of a mature thinker who, living on the threshold of the age of "mass-man," saw the cultural values he so treasured being threatened with extinction by l'homme vulgaire.

Renan, then, represented his century in more than one way. In the sense that he preached the idea of progress, historical dialectic, and "humanity," he expressed a mainstream tendency of nineteenth-century thought. On the other hand, his later disenchantments concerning the prospects for civilization anticipate that fin-de-siècle pessimism of which Nietzsche was the most important exponent. The essential difference between Nietzsche and Renan is that, unlike Renan, Nietzsche accepted an alternative to faith in history. Renan, in meeting the challenge of the French Enlightenment, tried to settle the religious and political crises it had helped to engender by constructing a more-or-

less typical nineteenth-century synthesis. On the religious level, he erected a philosophy of history in which Humanity rather than Providence played the central role. On the political level, he urged a system which would temper the heritage of the French Revolution with a re-vitalised constitutional monarchy. His synthesis was showing signs of strain by the mid-1870's; yet despite his talk of "all-is-vanity," Renan sustained the basic elements of his idealism until the very end. Closing the fifth and last volume of his Histoire du peuple d'Israel with what were some of his final words he re-affirmed his faith in mankind and in the eventual historical triumph of justice:

> After centuries of battles brought about by national rivalries, humanity will organize itself peacefully. The amount of evil [in the world] will be greatly reduced. Save for very rare exceptions, everyone will be content with life. With inevitable reservations, the Jewish programme will be accomplished: in the absence of a rewarding heaven, justice will really come to exist on earth.[34]

Renan's statement of confidence in inevitable justice in this world is only one example of the confidence that dominated his century. The "metaphysical rebellion" which Albert Camus has described in L'Homme révolté had its roots in the eighteenth-century revolt against Original Sin and against the notion of an intervening Providence. This revolt entailed the abolition of the idea of divine grace. Consequently, as Camus has remarked, all those free-thinkers

who lived in the nineteenth century and who could not accept the prospect of nihilism replaced the hope of heavenly grace with the hope of earthly justice.[35] The most significant philosophy of history which based itself upon this hope was, of course, that of Karl Marx. He, like Renan--like Saint-Simon, Hegel, or Comte still earlier--staked all on History. History had to work according to their conceptions, so that humanity's utopia of "justice" could come to exist. The only alternative was nihilism.

This alternative represented the choice adopted by Nietzsche. Rejecting historical optimism, Nietzsche accepted without reservation the full implications of the death of God. History, in its own right, had no meaning, nor was it valid to invent a meaning for it. This is the broadest sense in which Nietzsche became a prophet of nihilism. Justice, as he remarked in rejecting Rousseau and the French Revolution, has nothing to do with equality. By saying this Nietzsche did not imply approval of imposed political and social inequality any more than of inherent physical and mental inequality. These inequalities he toook as given, unchangeable facts. What irked Nietzsche was the definition of mankind's highest goal as a future utopia, either heavenly or earthly, in which the weak would be compensated at the expense of the strong. Nietzsche not only sought to transcend history but to transcend the very notion of "humanity." His persistent opposition to all forms of nineteenth-century political ideologies--liberalism,

socialism, democracy--was, taken in larger sense, an opposition to the idea of politics itself. Politics--like the abstraction "humanity" and like Christianity--subordinated the individual to an end greater than himself. Christiantity judged men in terms of their standing with God; and politics, regardless of whatever variety, assessed the value of a man in terms of how he related to other men. Nietzsche's own standard of values demanded that men be measured solely by the degree of individual self-perfection they achieved, without recourse to any other scale of appraisal. Only by subjugating it to this egotistical philosophy of life could history take on significance. The eternal example of an ubermensch, like Goethe, offered Nietzsche an illustration of how the individual, as an artist, could actually surpass history. His fervent applause of Goethe's alleged repudiation of Romanticism and the French Revolution perhaps remains the best indicator of Nietzsche's response to the challenge of the eighteenth century. One must wonder, however, whether it is enough to conceive a meaning for life, and thus for history, in Nietzsche's fashion. As noble an egoist philosophy as his may be, it still leaves something to be desired. Surveying the relationship of our century's mind to that of the nineteenth, one feels impelled to conclude that Nietzsche's iconoclasm bears much more relevance to our own day than do the chimerical utopias of so much nineteenth-century thought. The model of a Goethe--or a Nietzsche--can inspire everyone

who wishes to make his life into a work of art. But Nietzsche's ideal rules out any concern with social equity; it does not allow participation with others in a common cause, nor does it admit to shared aspirations achieved through mutual efforts. Coming to grips with Nietzsche's philosophy can be a healthy exercise, in that it rids one of chimeras. Yet one must hesitate at Nietzsche's refusal to acknowledge the worth of self-sacrifice in a collective interest; one balks at his denial of the value of human community. Even for many independence-seeking iconclasts, anti-utopians and would-be artists, such refusals and denials rob a life of too much potential significance.

NOTES

The definitive edition of Renan's collected writings is the Oeuvres completes, ed. H. Psichari (10 vols.; Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1947-1961); it is referred to, throughout this monograph, as OC.

Abbreviations used for English editions of Nietzsche's works are as follows; all translations, save the Complete Works edited by O. Levy, are those of Walter Kaufmann.

BW Basic Writings of Nietzsche (New York: Modern Library, 1968)

CW Complete Works of Friederich Nietzsche (18 vols.; London: Foulis, 1909-1913); only vols. IV, V, VI, VII, and IX are used for purposes of this thesis; translators of individual titles included in those volumes are indicated in my bibliography.

GS The Gay Science (Vintage Books, New York: Random House, 1974).

PN The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Viking Press, 1954).

WP The Will to Power (Vintage Books, New York: Random House, 1968).

The text of this thesis offers the commonly-employed English titles of Nietzsche's books. The German titles are given in my bibliography, in parentheses, following the listing of the English translation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1 For any understanding of the eighteenth-century background to the modern world, two great works of recent synthesis on the intellectual and political revolutions of that period are indispensable reading. On the intellectual aspect, see Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: an Interpretation (2 vols.; New York: Knopf, 1966-69; Vol. I, The Rise of Modern Paganism; Vol. II, The Science of Freedom. On the political aspect, see R. R. Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution (2 vols.; Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1957-62); Vol. 1, The Challenge; Vol. II, The Struggle.

2 This sense of the word is implied in the titles of books such as Peter Gay's The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment (New York: Knopf, 1954) and Alfred Cobban's In Search of Humanity: the Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History (London: Cape, 1960).

3 For a corrective to the persistent misconceptions about the philosophes, see the works of Gay, particularly the title-essay in The Party of Humanity, pp. 262-290.

4 One highly erudite and imaginative effort has been recently made to find the roots of modern "moral nihilism" in the French Enlightenment. In the two already-published volumes of a projected trilogy on the French Enlightenment, Lester G. Crocker suggests how the philosophes' repudiation of Original Sin led them to build secular moralities which, claims Crocker, anticipate much of the intellectual and political crisis of our time. See An Age of Crisis: Man and the World in Eighteenth-Century French Thought and its successor-volume, Nature and Culture: Ethical Thought In the French Enlightenment (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1955 and 1963). Crocker's argument, however stimulating, is as often as not exaggerated and misleading in its attempts to relate French thought of the eighteenth century to the social and political horrors of the twentieth. See Gay's criticisms: The Party of Humanity, pp. 283-86; The Enlightenment, I, 427f.

5 The phrase is Gay's: The Party of Humanity, p. 289.

6 To the Finland Station (Anchor Books, New York: Doubleday, 1953), p. 43.

7 See D. Bierer, "Renan and his Interpreters: a Study in French Intellectual Warfare," Journal of Modern History, XXV (1953), 381.

8 H. W. Wardman, Ernest Renan: a Critical Biography (London: Athlone Press, 1964), p. 1.

9 Camus, p. 99.

10 As the reader will observe in Chapter III, Nietzsche identified Rousseau with the Revolution while separating him from the Enlightenment. Nietzsche aside, however, the term "French Enlightenment" in the title of this thesis is emphatically meant to imply Rousseau as much as any other philosophe. The present writer conceives of an Enlightenment synthesis along the lines of scholars like Cassirer and Gay, an Enlightenment to which Rousseau indispensably belonged. The fact that Rousseau represents an essential phase of Romanticism (or "pre-Romanticism") in no way denies him membership in the Enlightenment.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1 Histoire de la littérature francaise (12th ed.; Paris: Hachette, 1912), p. 1100.

2 Strauss (1808-1874) published his Leben Jesus in 1835, a book which was to rank with Renan's Vie de Jésus as one of the two most famous nineteenth-century biographies of Jesus. Strauss's Der alte und der neue Glaube was the object of Nietzsche's polemic in the first of the Untimely Meditations (1873).

3 OC, I, 443.

4 OC, VII, 130.

5 Even a first-rate critic like Henri Peyre overlooks the fact that Renan's attitude toward Voltaire was on occasion favourable. Renan treated Voltaire disdainfully more often than not, but certainly not always, contrary to what Peyre has argued in his Renan (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969), p. 40.

6 OC, III, 882.

7 OC, III, 1039.

8 OC, IX, 330.

9 OC, I, 316.

10 OC, I, 230.

11 OC, III, 1089. The same passage, slightly modified, appears in Renan's Questions contemporaines (I, 224f.) and in his Lettres de famille (IX, 118f.).

12 OC, III, 844, 1133.

13 OC, VIII, 1152.

14 OC, VIII, 1173.

15 OC, X, 493.

16 OC, I, 77f. Emphasis added. See also J. Orno, "Comment Renan voyait l'ancien régime francais d'après

ses articles dans la 'Revue des Deux Mondes,'" L'Information historique, XXXIII (1971), 63.

17 OC, VII, 282.

18 OC, VII, 157.

19 OC, III, 1136.

20 OC, VII, 21. Emphasis added. The passage also appears in Les Apôtres, vol. II of Les Origines du Christianisme; OC, IV, 466.

21 OC, III, 1078f. Emphasis added.

22 OC, III, 780.

23 OC, III, 947.

24 OC, VII, 81.

25 OC, IX, 383.

26 On Renan and German philosophy, see H. Tronchon, Ernest Renan et l'étranger (Strassbourg; Université de Strassbourg, 1933), chapters V (pp. 155-204) and VI (pp. 205-259). Chapter VI is devoted to a study of Herder's influence on Renan.

27 J. Darmesteter, "Ernest Renan," New World, II (1893), 408.

28 OC, II, 865.

29 OC, I, 327.

30 Peyre notes the tendency of past critics to overestimate the role of German influences in the intellectual formation of Renan. See op. cit., p. 25.

31 Friederich Meinecke's now classic Historism, trans. J. Anderson (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1972) is probably the most penetrating study of the emergence of the "organic" conception of history in late eighteenth-century Germany. Using first Voltaire and Montesquieu, then Herder and Goethe, as examples, Meinecke treats the historical philosophy of the French Enlightenment as a prelude to (what in his view was) the richer, more mature historical mind of Germany in the later eighteenth century.

32 OC, VII, 1001.

33 OC, VII, 42.

34 OC, II, 1124.

35 OC, III, 1073, 1101.

36 OC, II, 1072.

37 On the relationship between Voltaire's anti-religious polemic and his scholarship, see Peter Gay, Voltaire's Politics: the Poet as Realist (Vintage Books. New York: 1965), pp. 239-272; and Ira Wade, The Intellectual Development of Voltaire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 451-563. These modern critiques are more sympathetic and, perhaps, understanding than Renan's.

38 Rousseau's relationship to German thought in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is of considerable importance to the history of ideas. Of all French thinkers, he was probably the one who most impressed the Germans of the period from about 1770 to about 1830. This is not to say that the German thinkers of that period were in any meaningful sense "disciples" of Rousseau. It is merely to recognize that Rousseau's moral, educational and political philosophy was--to Herder, Kant, Goethe, Fichte, and Hegel-- an immensely powerful force with which they all felt obliged to come to terms. The following studies offer diverse interpretations of Rousseau's influence upon those five German thinkers: M. Bemol, "Goethe et Rousseau, ou la double influence," Etudes germaniques, IX (1954), 257-277; L. Benrubi, "Goethe et Schiller, continuateurs de Rousseau." Revue de métaphysique et de morale, XX (1912), 441-450; V. Delbos, "Rousseau et Kant," Ibid, 429-439; Benrubi, "Rousseau et le mouvement philosophique et pedagogique en Allemagne," Annales de la société J. J. Rousseau, VIII (1912), 99-130, on Kant, Herder and Fichte; V. Brunet, L'Influence de Rousseau sur les idées politiques et sociales et sur la sentimentalité de Goethe (Toulouse: Imprimerie régionale, 1932); E. Cassirer, Rousseau, Kant, Goethe, trans. J. Gutmann et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), the first essay of which is on Rousseau and Kant; L. Diguit, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Kant et Hegel," Revue du droit publique en France et a l'étranger, XXXV (1918), 173-211, 325-377; G. A. Kelly, Idealism, Politics and History: Sources of Hegelian Thought (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), on Rousseau, Kant, Fichte and Hegel; Meinecke, op. cit., 300, 305, 307 f., 313, 322, 330, 353, 368, on Rousseau and Herder; H. M. Wolff, "Der Junge Herder und die Entwicklungsidee Rousseaus." Publications of the Modern Language Association, LVII (1947), 753-819.

39 OC, IX, 310; see also pp. 114,321.

40 OC, IV, 369.

41 OC, III, 1098. Voltaire's phrase appears in his letter of 30 August 1755 to Rousseau, responding to the just-published Second Discourse.

42 OC, III, 748.

43 OC, V, 1129.

44 OC, I, 549; VIII, 1175.

45 Renan may have unwittingly contradicted himself. He at one point declares (see supra, footnote 42) that the members of the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies, as well as of the Convention, were disciples of Voltaire and Rousseau. Yet this seems inconsistent with his claim that the earlier, still-royalist period of the Revolution (i.e., the period of at least the first, if not both, Assemblies) was more in keeping with the un-Rousseauean politics of Montesquieu and Turgot.

46 OC, I, 337.

47 OC, I, 65n. See also Orno, loc. cit.

48 Jean Pommier has remarked of Renan during this period of his life that "il serait bien républicain, mais la République implique la vertu--eh! eh! il a lu Montesquieu--et la France n'a pas de vertu." Renan d'aprés des documents inédits (Paris: Perrin, 1923). p. 247.

49 OC, I, 478.

50 OC, I, 487.

51 OC, IX, 344.

52 OC, I, 357. F. A. Hayek's The Constitution of Liberty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 59-70, offers an illuminating chapter on the differences between two basic "liberal" conceptions of political growth, the one essentially "French" or "Cartesian," the other, basically British. The former, argues Hayek, had tended to dwell upon absolutes and has sought to define a model of political man that transcends time and place. The more empirical "British" method, to the contrary, has emphasized the variable, evolutionary, and "spontaneous" character of political arrangements. As Hayek notes (p. 56), French "liberal" thinkers like Montesquieu, Constant, and de Tocqueville are much closer to the British tradition: one could well include Renan in that tradition. Indeed, in a footnote to his chapter (see p. 435), Hayek quotes Renan in support of his critique of the Cartesian method. The passage he cites from Renan is worth reciting here--keeping in mind that the "libéralisme" Renan

here described meant, of course, the excessively rationalistic tendencies of much French political thought:

"Le libéralisme, ayant la prétention de se fonder uniquement sur les principes de la raison, croit d'ordinaire de n'avoir pas besoin des traditions. Là est son erreur. . . . L'erreur de l'ecole libérale est d'avoir trop cru qu'il est facile de créer la liberté par la réflexion, et de n'avoir pas vu qu'un établissement n'est solide que quand il a des racines historiques. . . . Elle ne vit pas que tous ses efforts ne pouvait sortir qu'une bonne administration, mais jamais la liberté, puisque la liberté résulte d'un droit antérieur et supérieur à celui de l'Etat, et non d'une déclaration improvisée ou d'un raisonnement philosophique plus ou moins bien déduit." (OC, II, 45f.)

53 K. Gore, L'Ideé de progrès dans la pensée de Renan (Paris: Nizet, 1970), p. 107.

54 See Orno, loc. cit.

55 OC, III, 1020.

56 OC, III, 720.

57 OC, III, 749.

58 Ibid.: see also OC, VIII, 850.

59 OC, III, 749.

60 OC, VIII, 42.

61 OC, VIII, 41f.

62 OC, VIII, 42n.

63 See the article by Wolff and the pages from Meinecke cited supra, footnote 38.

64 For corrective studies to the legends about the influence of Rousseau's political thought upon the French Revolution, see Palmer, I, 119-127; Cobban, Rousseau and the Modern State (London: Allen-Unwin, 1964), pp. 20-31; and especially J. MacDonald, Rousseau and the French Revolution (London: Athlone, 1965), passim. On the more general question of the relationship between political theory per se and the Revolution, see Cobban, "The Enlightenment and the French Revolution," in his Aspects of the French Revolution (London: Cape, 1968), pp. 18-28; and Gay, "Rhetoric and Politics in the French Revolution," in The Party of Humanity, pp. 162-181.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1 Von Hegel zu Nietzsche (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1941), p. 348; From Hegel to Nietzsche, trans. D. Green (Anchor Books. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1967), p. 257.

2 See Kaufmann's editorial note, BW, p. 739.

3 W. D. Williams, Nietzsche and the French (London: Blackwell, 1952), p. 52.

4 BW, p. 739. See also J. Guehenno, "Nietzsche et Voltaire," Le Figaro, 25 nov. 1944; section litteraire, p. 1.

5 C. Andler, Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensee (3 vols.; Paris: Gallimard, 1958), II, 287f. Nietzsche had already signaled his admiration for Voltaire in an 1876 letter to Carl von Gersdorf: "Voltaire, dem ich meine erstern Huldingungen brachte . . . " Gesammelte Briefe (4 vols.; Leipzig: Schuster-Loeffer, 1900ff.), I, 373.

6 In early drafts of The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzscche had compared Greek tragedy with that of seventeenth-century France; both his knowledge and his sympathy definitely lay with the former. See Williams, p. 9.

7 CW, VI, 200f.

8 CW, VI, 42.

9 CW, VII, 14.

10 Quoted in W. Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (3rd ed.; Vintage Books. New York: Random House, 1968), p. 19.

11 See ibid., pp. 134ff.

12 CW, IV, 79f.

13 GS, p. 157.

14 CW, VII, 223.

15 Gesammelte Briefe, IV, 143.

16 GS, p. 105f.

17 BW, p. 237. Williams (p. 130) locates the Voltaire quotation as coming from the "Epitre à un homme" of 1776.

18 CW, IX, 139.

19 GS, p. 155.

20 That Rousseau fascinated Nietzsche is rightly admitted by W. D. Williams in his Nietzsche and the French. Yet Williams argues that Nietzsche's comments on Rousseau evidenced a sharing of temperament and belief by the two thinkers, that Nietzsche's fascination with Rousseau was one of affinity. In reality, it was one of repulsion. "The two men are at one in the general cast of their minds," says Williams (p. 11); "in its deepest implications, [Nietzsche's] attack on Rousseau is an attack on his own alter ego" (p. 170). He even dares to "venture the assertion that Rousseau's 'homme naturel' and Nietzsche's Superman [sic] are in essence terms for the same thing" (p. 171; also compare pp. 21, 64, 88 with the parts of my chapter which quote and discuss the same passages from Nietzsche as does Williams on those respective pages). Williams's serious misunderstanding of Nietzsche is essentially reducible to his failure in dealing with Nietzsche's theme of ressentiment, a theme given much attention in my chapter but virtually ignored in his book. The rebellious, non-conformist spirit common to both Nietzsche and Rousseau does in a superficial way make their attitudes "fundamentally akin" (p. 170). But Williams fails to realize that Nietzsche interpreted this spirit in Rousseau as one of ressentiment, of a man sick with vengeful motives against the society which denied him Given his neglect of the ressentiment theme, Williams erroneously interprets many of Nietzsche's remarks on Rousseau as betraying sympathy for Rousseau's attempt at self-affirmation. In fact, those remarks implied reference to Rousseau's ressentiment, and as such signified hostility, not sympathy.

21 CW, IX, 167.

22 WP, p. 206.

23 PN, p. 552f. This passage, drawn from section 48 of the chapter "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," is the most fundamental in all of Nietzsche's work for an understanding of his views on Rousseau. As the reader will observe, a number of Nietzsche's other statements on French thought and politics seem either to anticipate or to follow this one. The reader will also note that there is far more in the "Skirmishes" chapter which bears upon Nietzsche's views of eighteenth-and nineteenth-century French thought than there is in any other single portion of his writings.

24 WP, p. 58.

25 WP, p. 186.

26 WP, p. 190.

27 CW, IX, 5; Nietzsche quotes Robespierre in French.

28 WP, p. 525.

29 WP, p. 528.

30 CW, V, 139.

31 GS, p. 145.

32 CW, IX, 327.

33 CW, IX, 499.

34 CW, IX, 24.

35 PN, p. 553.

36 CW, V, 139f.

37 CW, VI, 389f.

38 On Nietzsche's discussion of ressentiment, see Kaufmann, Nietzsche, pp. 371-78. Nietzsche used the French word throughout.

39 CW, IX, 5.

40 PN, p. 211f.

41 WP, p. 59.

42 WP, p. 58.

43 On Nietzsche's concept of suffering, see esp. the key passage in Beyond Good and Evil, BW, p. 344.

44 WP, p. 529.

45 J. Wilhelm has emphasized that French Romanticism "ist in Nietzsches Augen eine Fortsetzung der Tradition Rousseaus." "Nietzsches Bild von Wesen und Entwicklung der Franzozischen Literatur," Beiträge zur Romanischen Literaturwissenschaft (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1950), p. 120.

46 Selected Letters of Friederich Nietzsche, trans. and ed. C. Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 277f.

47 PN, pp. 513, 514, 516.

48 WP, p. 42, 63.

49 CW, VII, 307f.

50 CW, IX, 5.

51 WP, p. 64.

52 WP, p. 72.

53 WP, p. 74.

54 See Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 202.

55 See Ibid., p. 128f.

56 BW, p. 43.

57 See PN, p. 552f., and Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 169f.

58 WP, pp. 61, 42. See also Andler, III, 372.

59 WP, p. 62.

60 WP, p. 63.

61 Selected Letters, p. 278.

62 WP, p. 62f.

63 CW, VI, 334f. In citing this passage and the succeeding one, this thesis departs from the Levy edition by translating Aufklarung as a proper noun, "the Enlightenment," rather than simply as the common noun, "enlightenment."

64 CW, VII, 310f.

65 Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 156.

66 PN, p. 553f.

67 Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 155.

68 See Ibid.; see also supra, footnotes 4-8 and my corresponding text.

69 PN, p. 554.

70 " . . . ce n'est pas une légère entreprise de démêler ce qu'il y a d'originaire et d'artificiel dans la nature actuelle de l'homme, et de bien connaître un état qui n'existe plus, qui n'a peut-être point existé, qui probablement n'existera jamais, et dont il est pourtant nécessaire d'avoir des notions justes, pour bien juger de notre état présent." Discours sur (l'origine et les fondements de) l'inégalité, "Préface."

71 "Ce passage de l'état de nature à l'état civil produit dans l'homme un changement tres remarquable, en substituant dans sa conduite la justice a l'instinct, et donnant a ses actions la moralité qui leur manquait auparavant. C'est alors seulement que, la voix du devoir succédant à l'impulsion physique, et le droit a l'appétit, l'homme, qui jusque là n'avait regarde que lui-meme, se voit forcé d'agir sur d'autres principes, et de consulter sa raison avant d'écouter ses penchants. Quoiqu'il se prive dans cet état de plusiers avantages qu'il tient de la nature, il en regagne de si grands, ses facultés s'exercent et se développent, ses idées s'étendent, ses sentiments s'ennoblissent, son âme toute entière s'élève a tel point que, si les abus de cette nouvelle condition ne le degradaient souvent au-dessous de celle dont il est sorti, il devrait benir sans cesse l'instant heureux qui l'en arrache pour jamais, et qui, d'un animal stupide et borné, fit un être intelligent et un homme." Du Contrat social, Book I, Chapter VIII.

72 "Il y a bien de difference entre l'homme naturel vivant dans l'état de nature et l'homme naturel vivant dans l'état de société. Emile n'est pas un sauvage a reléguer; c'est un sauvage fait pour habiter les villes, il faut qu'il sache y trouver son nécessaire, tirer parti de leurs habitants et vivre, sinon comme eux, du moins avec eux." Emile, Book III, 22nd paragraph from the end.

73 On the theme of "nature" in Rousseau's work, see in particular E. H. Wright, The Meaning of Rousseau (London: Oxford, 1928), passim. In further defence of Rousseau, see also J. Barzun, Classic, Romantic, and Modern (Anchor Books. New York: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 18-30, 173-179; E. Cassirer, The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, trans. and ed. P. Gay (Midland Books. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), passim; Cobban, In Search of Humanity, pp. 147-160, and Rousseau and the Modern State, pp. 141-158; Gay, Enlightenment, II, 529-552; G. Lanson, "L'Unité de la pensée de J. J. Rousseau," Annales de la société J. J. Rousseau, VIII (1912), 1-31.

74 On Rousseau's rationalism and its eighteenth-century reception, see R. Derathe, Le Rationalisme de J. J. Rousseau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), esp. the chapter "Les Réfutations catholiques de l'Emile au XVIIIe siècle," pp. 139-165.

75 E. Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, trans. F. Koelln, J. Pettegrove (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 156f. A version of this important statement on Rousseau also appears in Cassirer's The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, pp. 75ff.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1 OC, III, 950.

2 Chapter I, "Spruche und Pfeile," aphorism no. 24 (PN, p. 470).

3 PN, p. 513.

4 Kaufmann's translation of the letter, WP, p. 51n.; see also Selected Letters, p. 275.

5 BW, pp. 704, 699.

6 PN, p. 671f.

7 WP, pp. 51, 483.

8 BW, p. 320; emphasis added.

9 BW, p. 700. Despite this particular criticism Nietzsche appears to have respected Taine's work as a whole. Of all the nineteenth-century French thinkers mentioned, Taine was the only one to receive as much as a single compliment. In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche called him "the foremost historian now living," (BW, p. 383) and, in notes of the late 1880's, he welcomed him as an antidote to the influences of Sainte-Beuve and Renan. (See Williams, p. 152.) The two even began a correspondence in 1886. (See Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 459.) The visciously hostile interpretation given Rousseau and the French Revolution in Taine's Origines de la France contemporaine, a German translation of which was present in Nietzsche's library among other of Taine's works (see Williams, loc. cit.; Andler, III, 372), might well have influenced Nietzsche's thinking.

10 PN, p. 675; BW, p. 632; WP, p. 66.

11 PN, p. 513.

12 PN, p. 515.

13 Selected Letters, p. 260; Andler, II, 285n.

14 See infra, footnotes 36-38 and my corresponding text.

15 Selected Letters, p. 118.

16 Andler, II, 285n.

17 PN, p. 584.

18 Williams, p. 149n.

19 This essay, originally published in 1883, is still worth reading for its balanced, lucid, and generally sympathetic treatment of Renan. The following lines from it, though meant to represent Bourget's own thinking, could serve as an excellent precis of Renan's thinking as it relates to the French Enlightenment:

"N-a-t-il [Renan] tout simplement interprété avec son imagination de la vie morale une des idées allemandes les plus opposées à notre génie francais? Je veux parler de cette conception de 'devenir'. . . . Non seulement la philosophie allemande du XIXe siècle considère l'univers comme un étagement d'organismes, mais elle le considère comme un étagement des organismes en mouvement. . . . C'est, comme on voit, le contraire de notre esprit classique, lequel procède par raissonements géometriques fondés sur des principes très simplifiés. Un tel esprit, excellent pour la discussion oratoire, sera frappé de sterilité quand il voudra réduire à ses formules la végétation touffue et changeante de la vie. Deux grandes philosophes de notre XVIIIe siècle ont démontré cette impuissance, en étudiant les choses de la religion et de la politique comme ils eussent fait propriétes d'un triangle. Le premier, Voltaire, est arrivé à cette critique seche et médiocre, malgré sa verve, qui ne voit guère dans un prêtre qu'un fripon, et dans un fidèle qu'un dupe. Le second, Rousseau, a formulé cette théorie du contrat social dont l'influence désastreuse sur notre existence nationale éclate aux yeux les plus prévenus."
P. Bourget, Oeuvres complètes (9 vols.; Paris: Plon, 1899, I, 58f.

20 The Journal's record of the day of Renan's first appearance at the Magny dinners, three months before the first edition of Vie de Jésus, is most interesting in the general context of the present study:

"28 mars [1863]. Dîner chez Magny. Le nouveau récipiendaire est Renan. Et la conversation va de suite naturellement à la religion. Sainte-Beuve dit que le paganisme a eté d'abord une jolie chose, puis est devenue une veritable pourriture, une v[érole]. Et le christianisme a été le mercure de cette v[érole]; mais on en a trop pris, et maintenant il faut que l'humanité se guérisse du remède. . . .

"Et la bataille est autour de Voltaire. Et tous deux [i.e., the Goncourts] en parlant de l'écrivain, et en ne tenant compte de son influence sociale et politique, nous contestons sa valeur littéraire, nous osons rapporter

l'opinion de l'abbe Trublet, le définissant 'la perfection de la médiocrité,' nous ne lui reconnaissons que la valeur d'un vulgarisateur, d'un journaliste, rien de plus. . . . Son théâtre, ose-t-on en parler? Son histoire: c'est le mensonge et la convention pompeuse et bête de la plus vieille et solennelle histoire. Sa science, ses hypothèses, un objet de risée pour les savants contemporaines! . . . "(Alongside of these remarks on Voltaire, Renan's critique of him looks almost adulatory!)

"Tous le monde nous tombe dessus, et Sainte-Beuve finit par déclarer que la France ne sera libre que lorsque Voltaire aura sa statue sur la place Louis XV. Et Voltaire amène chez Saine-Beuve un éloge de Rousseau, dont il parle comme un esprit de sa famille, comme un homme de sa race, éloge qu'un brutal coupe par ses mots: 'Rousseau, un lacquais qui se tire le q[ueue].'

"Renan, devant cette violence de la pensée et du verbe, un peu effarouché, reste a peu pres muet, curieux pourtant, attentif, interesse, buvant le cynisme des paroles, ainsi qu'une femme honnête dans un souper des filles." E. and J. Goncourt, Journal (9 vols.; Paris: Charpentier, 1904), II, 82f.

21 WP, p. 79.

22 BW, p. 253.

23 See Bourget, op.cit., p. 53, and Renan's OC, I, 280.

24 BW, p. 593f.

25 See the analysis of the second Meditation in Kaufmann, Nietzsche, pp. 141-52.

26 Ibid., p. 149; CW, V, 81.

27 Kaufmann, loc.cit.

28 Nietzsches Briefweschel mit Franz Overbeck (Leipzig: Insel, 1916), p. 365. Compare the translations in Selected Letters, p. 260, and in Nietzsche: a Self-Portrait from his Letters, ed. and trans. P. Fuss and H. Schapiro (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 95. The sense of Nietzsche's rhetorical question ("What is it that he wishes to determine... .") depends on a play with the infinitive verb feststellen and the adjectival participle feststand. "Was will man denn feststellen--etwas, das im Augenblick des Geschehens, selbst nicht, 'feststand'?"

29 "Kunst und Kunstler," in Nietzsches Gesammette Werke (23 vols.; Munich: Musarion, 1926,) XVIII, 365.

30 PN, p. 513f. A little further on in the "Impossible Ones" section, Nietzsche concluded his polemic against George

Sand with the observation, "But Renan reveres her!" (PN, p. 516). He no doubt based this observation on what he had read in Vol. II of the Journal des Goncourt, pp. 90 and 98.

31 ". . . Pascal, who believed in the corruption of his reason by original sin when in fact it had been corrupted only by Christianity." (PN, p. 572.)

32 Nietzsche's association of Christianity with the herd-mentality is too well-known to need any comment. On his association of "the scientific man" and the herd, see sec. 206 of Beyond Good and Evil, BW, p. 315.

33 OC, VI, 11ff.

34 PN, p. 584.

35 OC, V, 1145-48.

36 PN, p. 600f.

37 The text of Vie de Jesus is in OC, IV. Héros appears in a plural usage on pp. 242, 254. Employing the singular meaning to describe Jesus on the eve of his trial and crucifixion, Renan wrote: "Jesus se retrouve tout entier et sans nuage. . . . Il ne reste que le héros incomparable de la Passion." (p. 322) Concerning the accusation of the Jewish authorities that Jesus had violated Mosaic law in declaring himself the Son of God, Renan added: "c'était la loi de la féroce antiquité, et le héros qui s'offrait pour l'abroger devait avant tout la subir." (p. 341) Elsewhere, he spoke of Jesus's "volonté héroique." (pp. 159, 371)

Génie is used early in the text to contrast Jesus to the Judaic scholars and law: "Mais la vraie poésie de la Bible, qui échappait aux puerils exégètes de Jerusalem, se révélait pleinement a son beau génie." (p. 108) "Il semble que la Loi n'eut jamais compté plus de sectateurs passionnés qu'au moment ou vivait déjà celui qui, de la pleine autorité de son génie et de sa grande âme, allait l'abroger," (p. 122) Later on, the term characterizes Jesus during and immediately after the period of his association with John the Baptist: "Mais, loin que le baptiste avait abdiqué avant Jésus, Jésus, pendant tous les temps qu'il passa près de lui, le reconnut pour supérieur et ne développa son propre génie que timidement." (p. 152) "Obsédé d'une idée de plus en plus impérieuse, Jesus marchera désormais avec une sorte d'impassibilité fatale dans la voie qui lui avaient tracée son étonnant génie et les circonstances extraordinaires ou il vivait." (p. 166) The word makes two appearances in Chapter XXI, where Renan studied the climactic last days of Jesus's teaching in Jerusalem before his enemies began to close in:

"Son harmonieux génie s'éxténue en des argumentations insipides sur la Loi et les Prophètes." (p. 300) "Son doux et pénetrant génie lui inspirait, quand il était seul avec ses disciples, des accents pleins de charme." (p. 303)

38 "I am against any attempt to introduce the fanatic into the Redeemer type: the word impérieux, which Renan uses, is alone enough to annul the type." (PN, p. 604) More directly in reference to the prophet Elijah than to Jesus, Renan wrote in the last chapter of Vie de Jésus: "Supposons un solitaire demeurant dans les carrières voisines de nos capitales, sortant de là de temps en temps pour se présenter aux palais des souverains, forçant la consigne, et, d'un ton impérieux, annonçant aux rois l'approche des révolutions dont il a été le promoteur. Cette idée seule nous fait sourire. Tel, cependant, fut Elie. Elie le Thesbite, de nos jours, ne franchirait pas le guichet des Tuileries. La prédication de Jésus, sa libre activite en Galilée, ne sont pas moins inconcevables dans les conditions sociales auxquelles nous sommes habitués." (p. 365) The feminine variation of the adjective, describing Jesus's "idée," occurs with génie in the first sentence of Chapter VIII (p. 166).

39 PN, p. 548 ("Skirmishes," sec. 44).

40 See R. M. Chadbourne, Ernest Renan (New York: Twayne, 1968), p. 66.

41 See particularly Chapter IV of Vie de Jésus, "Ordre d'idées au sein duquel se développa Jésus," OC, IV, 113-129.

42 OC, IV, 124.

43 OC, IV, 127.

44 OC, IV, 129.

45 PN, p. 547.

46 Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 340f. Since Nietzsche read Dostoyevsky in French translation, l'idiot would have been the word he originally encountered.

A scene from near the end of another of Dostoyevsky's novels serves to emphasise the importance of Renan's Vie de Jésus for nineteenth-century disbelief. Although it is most often erroneously regarded as merely an attempt to shake orthodoxy, Renan's classic was just as significantly designed to present Jesus's life to biblically-ignorant non-believers in a way palatable to them. For many who had jettissoned the faith, Vie de Jésus, one of the nineteenth-century's best-sellers, was likely the only mature encounter they had with the gospel story. In

this connection, an incident from Book Three, Chapter VII of The Devils (sometimes called The Possessed) comes to mind. The old man Stepan Verkhovensky, who had always prided himself on being a good, iconoclastic Voltairean, had run away from Mrs. Stavrogin. Coming upon a small village and, there offered shelter, he met the gospel-selling peasant-woman through whose influence his long-lost faith was to be restored. As he agreed to purchase from her, the thought crossed his mind that, although it had been "at least thirty years" since his last reading the gospels, he did recall a little from them from his reading Renan's Vie de Jesus "seven years before."

47 PN, p. 549 ("Skirmishes," sec. 45).

48 PN, p. 603.

49 PN, p. 604; Renan actually wrote "ce grand" (OC, IV, 294).

50 OC, IV, 293.

51 OC, IV, 288f.

52 For most of what immediately follows, I am indebted to C. Andler, "Nietzsche et ses dernieres études sur l'histoire de la civilization," Revue de métaphysique et de morale, XXXV (1928), 167ff.

53 Ibid., p. 176.

54 PN, p. 463.

55 PN, p. 466.

56 OC, IV, 851f.

57 Andler, loc.cit.

58 See Kaufmann's editorial note, WP, p. 85n.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1 OC, V, 307f.; 589f.

2 Letter to Marcellin Berthelot, Aug. 17, 1879; cited in R. M. Chadbourne, Ernest Renan as an Essayist (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 139.

3 BW, p. 251.

4 J. Guehénno, "Renan," La nouvelle revue francaise, XXIX (1er mai, 1967), 980.

5 See Chadbourne, Ernest Renan, p. 46.

6 This statement about Nietzsche's nihilism speaks to his moral, social and political world-view. As for his view on destiny, his "amor fati," one must take stock of what Lowith has called his "attempt to surmount nihilism" in the theory of "Eternal Recurrance." On the theme of the Recurrance, see Lowith, pp. 186-199; Kaufmann, Nietzsche, pp. 316-333.

7 OC, IV, 367.

8 OC, IV, 862.

9 WP, p. 517.

10 See Wardman, p. 142.

11 J. Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses (New York: Norton, 1932), passim, esp. pp. 56, 82.

12 For summary and and interpretation of the Dialogues philosophiques, see Wardman, pp. 140-45; Chadbourne, Ernest Renan, pp. 109-114.

13 Wardman, p. 141.

14 OC, I, 572.

15 OC, I, 613.

16 OC, I, 617.

17 OC, I, 552.

18 C. Renouvier, "Le 'Rêve de d'Alembert' et les 'rêves' de M. Renan," La Critique philosophique, II (1876), 393-400.

19 Andler, III, 206f.; Lichtenberger, p. 646; K. Sandelin, "Über den Einfluss des französischen Geistes auf die Philosophie Friederich Nietzsches," Arctos, II (1931), 69; T. Droz, "La Revanche de l'individu--Frédéric Nietzsche," La Semaine littéraire, no. 44 (1894), 520.

20 Lichtenberger, loc.cit.

21 OC, I, 608.

22 OC, I, 610.

23 OC, I, 625.

24 Ortega y Gassett, p. 129.

25 "The romantic school began with the worship of subjective sensibility and the revolt against legality of which Rousseau was the first great prophet; and through various fluxes and refluxes, right wings and left wings, it stands today with two men of genius, M. Renan and M. Zola, as its principal exponents--one speaking with its masculine, and the other with what might be called its feminine voice. . . . One dwells on the sensibilities for their energy, the other for their sweetness; one speaks with a voice of bronze, the other with that of an Aeolian harp; one ruggedly ignores the distinction of good and evil, the other plays the coquette between the craven unmanliness of his Philosophic Dialogues and the butterfly optimism of his Souvenirs [d'enfance et] de [j]eunesse. But under the pages of both there sounds incessantly the hoarse bass of vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas, which the reader may hear, wherever he will, between the lines. . . . Whether, like Renan, we look upon life in a more refined way, as a romance of the spirit; or whether, like the friends of M. Zola, we pride ourselves on our 'scientific' and 'analytical' character, and prefer to be cynical, and call the world a 'roman expérimental' on an infinite scale--in either case, the world appears to us potentially as what . . . Carlyle once called it, a vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha and mill of death." W. James, "The Dilemma of Determinism," Essays on Faith and Morals (Meridian Books. New York: New World Publishing Co., 1962), p. 172f. Nietzsche, for his part, had classed Renan and Zola as among "My Impossible Ones." Immediately preceding his long passage on Renan in Twilight, he wrote "Zola, or the delight in stinking." (PN, p. 513).

26 W. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience

(New York: The New American Library, 1958), pp. 45-47. The Voltaire quotation, for which James indicates no source, comes from a letter 22 December 1766 to the Cardinal de Bernis. For the orginal version of the passage which James here translated and abridged from Renan, see OC, II, 1159f.

James's judgement on Nietzsche, which directly follows his observations on Renan, is most unfair: "But if hostile to light irony, religion is equally hostile to heavy grumbling and complaint. The world appears tragic enough in some religions, but the tragedy is realized as a purging, and a way of deliverance is held to exist. . . . The mood of a Schopenhauer or a Nietzsche, . . . though often an ennobling sadness, is almost as often as not only peevishness running away with the bit in its teeth. The sallies of the two German authors remind one, half the time, of the sick shriek of two dying rats. They lack the purgatorial note which religious sadness gives forth." (p.47).

This pairing of Nietzsche with Schopenhauer is belied by Nietzsche's mature repudiation of Schopenhauer. Though under the spell of Schopenhauer's "negation of the will" during his youth, Nietzsche forcefully rejected Schopenhauer from the mid-1870's on. This rejection constituted a firm disapproval of this dying-rat-shriek pessimism which James wrongly attributed to Nietzsche. On Nietzsche versus Schopenhauer, see R. J. Hollingdale, Nietzsche: the Man and his Philosophy (London: Hamilton, 1965), pp. 84-87.

27 Chadbourne, Ernest Renan as an Essayist, p. 184.

28 OC, I, 729.

29 OC, I, 867.

30 James's translation, op.cit., p. 46; original in OC, II, 1159.

31 OC, V, 1048.

32 W. James, "Renan's 'Dialogues,'" in Collected Essays and Reviews (New York: Russell and Russell, 1920), p. 36f.

33 The Letters of William James (2 vols.; Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), I, 326.

34 OC, VI, 1518.

35 Camus, p. 269.

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